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THE LIFE

OF

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

VOLUME III.

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THE LIFE

OF

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,

AUTHORESS OF "OUR VILLAGE," ETC.

RELATED IN A SELECTION FROM HER LETTERS
TO HER FRIENDS.

EDITED

BY THE REV. A. G. L'ESTRANGE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

SECOND AND REVISED EDITION.

LONDON:
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1870.

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THE

LIFE AND LETTERS

OF

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

CHAPTER I.

LETTERS FOR 1833.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, April 8, 1833.

My dearest,—I shall certainly be a convert to your countrymen. I am turned O'Connell-ite, partly from love of his speeches. I have received a most curious letter, signed 'A Munster Man,' containing a real story, which he wants me to put into a tale; and I really think I shall try it, it is so characteristic, and curious and pleasant into the bargain.

It is, I think, one of the pleasantest signs of the times, to see how beautifully flowers are *painted* now, by the aid of the needle, on all sorts of material:—"printed in lawn," by one fair damsel, like Bellario—embroidered in silk and threads of gold and silver by another, as Clarissa was wont—cross-stitched with the fashionable *tapis d'amitié* in German wool—worked

even in beads or mother-of-pearl: everywhere *flowers*, and really most beautifully imitated they are. Some of the carpet-work is quite astonishing. Lady Madalina Palmer is working one, which emulates the paintings of Van Huysum; and a most graceful amusement it is. She got her patterns and materials last year at Heidelberg; and the only objection is, that, when finished, it will cost about 500*l.*, and be too delicate for the sole of any slipper short of Cinderella's. But some of the less ambitious and less expensive things are charming, without any drawback. I saw a wreath of fuchsias the other day (by-the-way we have the new *Fuchsia longiflora*, six inches long, in beautiful blossom) worked in floss silk upon black net, to be worn over black satin, that was really most elegant; and I have two bags—one of forget-me-nots in beads, the other of white chrysanthemums in mother-of-pearl and floss silks—that are each of them exquisite. They even work groups of figures in tent stitch for screens; and you can hardly conceive the fashion, or passion, for embroidering at this moment,

God bless you, my dear love! I am better, but not well. My father, thank Heaven! is brilliantly well. I am sorely afraid of a novel; and yet, I suppose, I must at least undertake some longer tales.

Yours most affectionately,

M. R. M.

To Sir William Elford, *Totnes*.

Three Mile Cross, Sept. 4, 1833.

My dear Friend,

All that you say of art is most pleasant. But were you not struck with London? The town itself? *That*, in its stupendous improvements—Regent Street,

the Regent's Park, and the new world all about Pall Mall, and again at Belgrave Square and Pimlico—always seems to me more beautiful and more wonderful than anything that it contains, fine and great as the collections are. You must have missed Sir Thomas Lawrence much. Did you see Mr. Jones? I hope you have not suffered from over-exertion; for I know, by experience, that nothing is more fatiguing than to sleep out of London, and yet mix in its bustle and gaieties. But I, at forty-five, am a much older person than you are, or than my own father is, for he went yesterday forty miles to fetch me a geranium, and returned with his prize in the highest glee possible.

Pray how are you off for archery meetings in Devonshire? The people here are all turned into Robin Hoods and Maid Marians; and my nearest neighbour and most intimate friend (Mrs. Merry), being secretary to the club, and the meetings being held at Mr. Palmer's fine old place of Luckley (a beautiful Elizabethan structure, standing amongst the finest oaks in the country), I hear a great deal of it. I suppose I must go some time or other, for they have made me an honorary member;—but I have no great fancy for the thing. It is a very troublesome way of making a hole in a piece of canvas, for that seems to me to be the sole result. The intended result is, of course, the promotion of matrimony, but our girls are so ugly that I have no hopes of that sort. There really is not a pretty young woman in the county.

Dear Lady Madalina is wonderfully well; she often asks for you. I am quite of your mind about Miss Martineau, and quite in your condition. I knew nothing of Political Economy before reading some of her little

books, and now I know less—so I mean to read no more of them.

Very faithfully and affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

If you ever look at the 'Court Magazine,' edited by Mrs. Norton, and published by Mr. Bull, you may find in the number for August a story of mine (which is false of course), which contains a very exact description of Luckley, and of the frightful uniform which it has pleased our secretary to inflict upon such of the ladies as are silly enough to wear it.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS.

Three Mile Cross, Oct. 22, 1833.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The little book of 'The Rhymed Plea,' first arrived to me with a short and simple inscription in the title-page, expressive of pleasure derived from my "tolerant and humanizing pen," but no note or word of any other sort from the author. I wrote back a short note expressive of my admiration of the work, and received a very long and circumstantial answer, telling me (and authorizing me to tell others) that his name was John Kenyon; that he lived during the winter at 39, Devonshire Place, with a single brother and sister of his wife's (this letter was dated "Twickenham"); that he had been for fifteen years the friend and correspondent of Wordsworth; but had only once seen Charles Lamb, and had not the pleasure of being acquainted, otherwise than by his high reputation, with Mr. Serjeant Talfourd; that he had been at Cambridge; had "stuck his prong in no profession;" had a brother

who had just taken my books to Vienna, by way of counterbalance to the Police Reports in the 'Times'—which brother was rather a profound and somewhat stern thinker, than an imaginative reader; and finally, that my praise had given as much pleasure to his wife, as his could have done to my father. The letter was charming; it conveyed a strong desire of acquaintance; and the frankness, coming after a little mystery—the kindness and the flattery—were altogether irresistible. In my reply, I could not help asking him if he knew you, and telling him how much I wished you to read his book; because you were in prose what he was in verse—and so you are; and this accounts for his sending you the poem. And then I told him—which is also the literal truth—that his kindness had given me the more pleasure because it had arrived at a time when the conduct of a near neighbour had given me great vexation.

Did you never read a French book called 'La Théorie des Compensations?' I believe in it firmly. By the way, the obdurate person in this case is Mr. Merry. He behaved ill to Mr. Talfourd, then my guest. You know my idolatry for that dear and honoured friend. I resented the thing, certainly with too much violence, at Mr. Walter's—Mrs. Walter having, with the kindest meaning, but very injudiciously, brought us together in the very moment of anger and without warning. Now, never having had a quarrel before with anybody (except the one, of which you know so much, with Mr. Macready), it has vexed me more than it should; for, after all, I lose nothing in losing the Merry's, except their friendship—or rather *his*, for I am quite sure that his good and gentle wife loves me as well as ever; and the friend who rejects an immediate and ample apology, and perseveres for six weeks in the

bitterest enmity, is not worth any deep regret. If you should hear of this from Mr. Milman (for Mr. Merry has made a great story of it, and I have said nothing), be so good, my dear friend, as to give me as decent a character as you can. I should not like to incur his ill opinion. My Mr. Kenyon never can be *your* Mr. Kenyon, with the padded chest, and the dyed moustache, and the running away at Waterloo; but do let me know. The clergyman at Silchester, whom Mr. Kenyon mentions as having seen, remembers a very intelligent gentleman having asked many questions about that time, but can't recollect (the simpleton) anything about his appearance. If a woman had seen him I should have had a full description, but men never do take notice; and, what is beyond measure provoking, the "*opposite neighbours*" to 39, Devonshire Place, to whom Mrs. Dupuy wrote for information on the subject, could tell nothing about the matter. Do let me hear anything that comes to your knowledge on the subject. You would be still more pleased with the letters than the book.

God bless you, my dear friend!

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MR. MERRY.

I cannot suffer you to leave our neighbourhood for weeks, perhaps for months, without making one more effort to soften a displeasure too justly excited—without once more acknowledging my fault, and entreating your forgiveness. Do not again repulse me—pray do not! Life is too short, and too full of calamity, for an alienation indefinitely prolonged—a pardon so long suspended. I know you better, perhaps, than you know

yourself, and am sure that, were I at this moment suffering under any great affliction, you would be the first —ay, the very first—to soothe and to succour me. If my father (which may God in his mercy avert!) were dead; if I myself were on a sick bed, or in prison, or in a workhouse (and you well know that this is the destiny to which I always look forward), then you would come to me—I am sure of it. You would be as ready to fly to my assistance then as the angel of peace and mercy at your side. But do not wait for that moment; do not, for an error which has been sincerely and severely repented, deprive a melancholy and a most anxious existence of one of its few consolations. Lonely and desolate as I am—with no one belonging to me in the world except my dear father—poor in every sense, earning with pain and difficulty a livelihood which every day makes more precarious, I cannot afford the loss of your sympathy. I say this without fear of misconstruction. You will understand that what I regret is the friendship and intimacy, the everyday intercourse of mind and of heart, on which even you yourself—so much more happily placed—did yet set some value. You did like me once; try me again. You will find me—at least I hope so—all the better for the rigorous discipline which my mind has lately undergone; the salutary and unwonted course of self-examination and self-abasement.

At all events, do not go without a few words of peace and of kindness. I send you the last flowers of my garden. Your flower seems to have continued in blossom on purpose to assist in the work of reconciliation. Do not scorn its sweet breath, or resist its mute pleadings, but give me in exchange one bunch of the laurustinus for which I used to ask you last winter, and

let it be a token of the full and perfect reconciliation for which I am a suppliant; and then I shall cherish it —oh, I cannot tell you how much!

Once again, forgive me—and farewell.

M. R. MITFORD.

Three Mile Cross,
Nov. 18, 1833.

To MRS. MERRY.

Nov. 20, 1833.

I do not lose a post, my very dear Mrs. Merry, in assuring you with how much pleasure I look forward to a renewal of our intercourse. Having said so much, I will not add a word in palliation of the offence which I shall always be the first to acknowledge and to deplore. The spirit of self-justification is an evil spirit, and the sooner this unhappy affair can be consigned to a merciful oblivion the better I am sure for me, and I should think for all. "The strong hours conquer us." Why should we struggle against them ?

Thank Mr. Merry for the relief which his letter has afforded me, and assure him that it is my earnest hope never by word or deed to recall to his recollection a moment which I must ever lament.

Adieu, my dear Mrs. Merry! Be so good as to present our kindest regards and good wishes to your family circle, and believe me

Most affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *Heathcote Street.*

Christmas Eve [1833].

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I write in great haste, just to caution you in case you should receive any authority, or pretended authority, from any quarter, to sell out our money in the funds, not to do so without communicating with me. I have no doubt of my father's integrity, but I think him likely to be imposed upon.

The post is at the door. With every good wish of this season and of all seasons,

Yours ever,

M. R. MITFORD.

Answer from the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS.

Dec. 26, 1833.

MY DEAR MISS MITFORD,

Depend upon it the money shall *never* be touched with my consent. It was consideration for your future welfare which prevented my father's consenting to its being sold out some years ago, when you had been persuaded, and wished to persuade him, to your own utter ruin. That 3000*l.* I consider as the sheet-anchor of your independence, if age should ever render literature irksome to you, or infirmity incapacitate you for exertion; and, while your father lives, it shall never stir from its present post in the funds. After he has ceased (as all fathers must cease) to live, my first object will be to consult with you and my most intelligent money-managing friends, and discover the mode of making the stock most profitable to your comfort, either by annuity or any other mode that may be thought most advisable.

Till then—from whatever quarter the proposition may come—I have but one black, blank, unqualified *No* for my answer. I do not doubt Dr. Mitford's integrity, but I have not the slightest confidence in his prudence; and I am fully satisfied that, if these three thousand and odd hundreds of pounds were placed at his disposal *to-day*, they would fly the way so many other thousands have gone before them, *to-morrow*. Excuse me saying this; but I cannot help it.

Yours most sincerely ever,

W. HARNESS.

CHAPTER II.

Letters for 1834.

To the Rev. William Harness.

Three Mile Cross,
Thursday night, May 2, 1834.

My dear Friend,

Mr. Milman gave my father in court to-day your sermon, for which I thank you most sincerely. It is a very able and a conciliatory plea for the church. My opinion (if an insignificant woman may presume to give one) is, that certain reforms ought to be; that very gross cases of pluralities should be abolished (it is too sweeping, I think, to say *all* pluralities); that some few of the clergy are too rich, and that a great many are too poor: but (although not holding all her doctrines) I heartily agree with you, that, as an establishment, the Church ought to remain; for to say nothing of the frightful precedent of sweeping away property, a precedent which would not stop there; the country would be overrun with fanatics, and, in the rural districts especially, a clergyman (provided he be not a magistrate) is generally, in *worldly* as well as spiritual matters, a great comfort to the poor. But our wise legislators never think of the rural districts—*never*. They legislate against gin-shops, which are the evil of great towns, and encourage beer-shops, which are the pest of the country; the cause of half the poverty and three-fourths of the demoralization.

But the Church must be (as many of her members *are*) wisely tolerant: bishops must not wage war with theatres, nor rectors with a Sunday evening game of cricket. If they take up the arms of the Puritans, the Puritans will beat them. Generally speaking, moreover, I think that the Church of England is *tolerant*—incomparably more so than the sects that assail her—and, therefore, if for no other cause, ought to be protected. Do you know Professor Sedgwick of Cambridge? We have had a young American namesake of his here for this last week—a charming person.

Yours ever,

M. R. M.

[Under a more than ordinary pressure from want of money, Dr. Mitford went to London early in May, either to procure the representation, or to sell the copyright, of 'Charles the First.' Through the introduction of Mr. Serle, he was made acquainted with Mr. Abbott, who had quitted Covent Garden and become manager of the Victoria Theatre. To him the play was offered; and, as the theatre was on the Surrey side of the Thames, and beyond the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain, there was no licenser to be consulted. The piece was immediately accepted. The terms offered were very liberal—two hundred pounds to be paid immediately, and a fourth share of the profits for a certain number of nights. But, though this was the first proposal, there was much delay in the negotiation; and it was not till the end of June that Dr. Mitford returned to Three Mile Cross, after the completion of his literary mission, and that Miss Mitford went to town to be present at the rehearsals, and witness the production of her tragedy.]

To DR. MITFORD, 8, *King Street, Cheapside.*

Three Mile Cross, May 13, 1834.

I thank you most heartily, my dearest father, for your great kindness about Mr. Bentley.*

Ben desires me to tell you to get the Wallace and the light whip for Miss Mitford; *I*, for my part, forbid you buying anything unless you sell the play or the copyright. Ben could only get a dozen cuttings of heart's-ease yesterday, Ratten having sold all the plants. I have had the creepers planted and the dahlias, and we have two beautiful geraniums come out, and your seedling is really superb; but I am sorry to say that the cats are more mischievous than ever. They got into the greenhouse last night—broke one of our best geraniums to pieces—tore a good deal of a night-scented stock—dragged my sofa-cover all over the floor, and danced all over the looking-glass. They have also scratched up our new border of red and blue flowers under the jessamine, and are really past bearing—particularly the white one, for I don't think the tabby would be so bad if alone. All the pets are well. The mare and Ben rolled the field yesterday, and Ben desires me to say that it looks very well.

Love to both the Williams and Mr. Sergeant.

Ever most affectionately yours,

M. R. M.

To DR. MITFORD, *King Street, Cheapside.*

May 15, 1834.

John and Ben are gone to the flower-show, and have taken some of our blooms to compare with those shown, and mean to bring home the names of the

* The publisher.

owners of any new geraniums, that we may try to get cuttings. So we shall know as much as if I went; I am so worried and out of sorts, that I should have had no sort of pleasure there. I have no doubt but you will do for the best. I should be content with 200*l.*—150*l.*—100*l.*—anything rather than risk; though I have a source of confidence in the play * that no one else has; for my reliance on Mr. Cathcart's acting increases rather than diminishes, which—fearful and doubtful as I am of everything else—is a great comfort. But I would gladly take 100*l.* for the tragedy nevertheless. Unless you get some money, my dear love, my going to town to spend money is absolutely out of the question. I would rather have 50*l.* down than the chance of 500*l.*, for I know I shall be cheated, notwithstanding Mr. Serle's kindness.

My garden really looks divine; I never saw anything so beautiful. God bless you!

Ever your own,

M. R. M.

To DR. MITFORD, 9, *Norfolk Street, London.*

Three Mile Cross, July 7, 1834.

We have had a most delightful evening at the Barnes's. They regretted your absence much; and so did I, because I think you would have enjoyed the party. There was Mr. McCulloch, the great political economist, whom I was glad to see; and a Mr. Walker, and a Dr. Elliotson; but the persons whom I was most delighted with were Mr. Dilke and his wife. He is the editor of the 'Athenæum' (always so kind to me), and I assure you I never in my life liked any one better. He is quite as cordial and enthusiastic as Allan Cunningham,

* Charles the First.

and one of the most perfect and accomplished gentlemen that I ever knew: you would be delighted with him. Barnes said to me, of his own accord, that he saw from the other papers that their reporter must have made a great mistake about Mr. Cathcart, and that he would send some one else and set it to rights. This was very pleasant; and Mr. Dilke promised also to say what was proper. I have neither seen nor heard of Mr. Serle,* nor of Mr. Abbott, who ought to have called to-day.

God bless you, my darling! I long for to-morrow, to hear all about you, and poor Dash, and my flowers; and when I have heard I will finish this. So good night.

Monday morning.

I copy, my dear father, the charming note which I have just received from the Duke of Devonshire:

"Brighton, July 6, 1834.

"MADAM,

"I left London for this place on Friday, and could not till to-day reply to your letter, and thank you for the copy of 'Charles the First.'

"I am happy and proud to accept the dedication of your work, and have the honour to be,

"Madam,

"Your faithful, humble servant,

"DEVONSHIRE."

* Mr. Serle was a gentleman of very superior abilities, who had left the bar for the stage. As an actor he was eminently correct and judicious, but never popular. He was also the author of 'The London Merchant' and one other play, which were beautifully written, and preserved much of the spirit and character of the old dramatists.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Bath.*

35, Norfolk Street, Strand, July 8th, 1834.

MY DEAREST EMILY,

This is the very first moment in which I have been able to answer your very kind letter. The papers will of course have told you that both I and my actor have been completely successful—though to have succeeded under the disadvantages of bringing out such a tragedy in a minor theatre is very extraordinary. However, we have *taught* the Queen, so that she plays very finely; and the thing is admirably got up, and the theatre beautiful, and Cathcart's acting refined, intellectual, powerful, and commanding beyond anything I ever witnessed. Mr. Serle wrote and spoke the prologue, which is just like one of Ben Jonson's, and the profound respect with which the whole thing has been treated is highly gratifying. They make a real queen of me, and would certainly demolish my humility, if I were happy enough to be humble; though I feel that over-praise, over-estimation, is a far more humbling thing—a thing that sends you back on your own mind to ask, "Have I deserved this?" than anything else that can be. For the first ten days I spent on an average from four to six hours every morning in the Victoria Theatre, at hard scolding, for the play has been entirely got up by me; then I dined out amongst twenty or thirty eminent strangers every evening. Since that, I have been to operas and pictures, and held a sort of drawing-room every morning; so that I am so worn out, as to have, for three days out of the last four, fainted dead away between four and five o'clock, a fine-lady trick which I never played before, and which teaches me that I must return, as soon as I can, into

the country, to write another play, and run again the same round of fatigue, excitement, and pleasure. After all, my primary object is, and has been, to establish Mr. Cathcart. We have done very, very much; and if we had *two* great theatres he would certainly be engaged at one of them.

Write to me, as usual, *at home* (for I must go back or die here), and believe me ever,

Most faithfully yours,

M. R. M.

To SIR WILLIAM ELFORD, *The Priory, Totnes.*

Three Mile Cross, August 8, 1834.

MY DEAR SIR WILLIAM,

I never heard Lady Morley's novel mentioned; but I have no time for novel reading, and (except Victor Hugo's matchless 'Notre Dame de Paris') have not opened one since 'Eugene Aram.' And I don't think, from the turn conversation seemed to take in London, that novels were much read there. They are too long. The books I heard spoken of were Crabbe's Life, Mrs. Siddons' Memoirs, Sir Egerton Brydges' Autobiography, the 'Bubbles from the Brunnens,' and 'Philip van Artevelde;' and of these, except the first and last, none will be heard of three months hence. All travels fast in London, and the book of the day is over in a week.

How splendidly beautiful London is! I had been there two or three times lately in the winter, but not for some years in the height of the season—when the bright sun throws those magnificent streets into strong light and shadow, and when there are brilliant crowds of gay carriages and well-dressed people to animate the scene.

And now, my dear Sir William, God bless you all

for some months! Do not, any of you, write to me, for I am overwhelmed with business, and it interrupts me and makes me wish to reply, when I ought to be otherwise engaged.

God bless you all! As soon as I am disengaged I will let you know. In the meanwhile rest assured of my most affectionate good wishes.

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, August 30, 1834.

A thousand thanks, dearest Emily, for your most welcome letter. I am going to answer it very inadequately, being very much tired to-night, and yet not sleepy enough to go to bed. So I sit down to talk to you purely and simply to refresh me and do me good—as the very thought of you always does. My fatigue springs from two causes—one pleasant, the other very much the reverse. I have had a levée to-day, as is very common with me in the summer season—people from London, or people from America, or people from Germany, or people from France; all clever, and almost all pleasant; and I became excited, and was quite done up, when we found out that some valuable geraniums, which had been stolen from our pits and advertised yesterday, had been carried away by a man only three doors off, whom we had employed for years, and done all for that our means would allow. He stole them and sold them to a neighbour, and then, finding that they were advertised, and that he should be detected, stole them again last night from the lady to whom he had sold them. Now, this is grievous. He might have had eight plants for asking, as freely as you might. This does one

harm, does it not? My father is quite unhappy, but I think that I was too vain and fond of my plants, and that it is a punishment. Well, I will talk of it no more.

Did I tell you that I had called my best seedling after Mr. Sergeant's play ?* Yes, I did. And did I tell you that I had an autograph of Mr. O'Connell's—most characteristic? Here it is:

"Still shalt thou be my waking theme,
Thy glories still my midnight dream;
And every thought and wish of mine,
Unconquered Erin! shall be thine!

"DANIEL O'CONNELL.

"*August* 4, 1834."

I was afraid that it was a regular circular autograph, but I heard of one different the other day, and have found out that this was written for me expressly, which rejoices me much. I have just been writing a sermon on Tolerance, the virtue most wanted in Ireland, on both sides, I think; you and yours, and Daniel O'Connell himself, seeming to me the only tolerant persons of your country, Protestant or Catholic.

I know your beautiful rose; it is French. I am to have that, and others, from Mr. Anderdon, whose collection of roses is as choice as his collection of pictures. Do you know the Devonshire briar? It is covered with semi-double flowers, and sweeter than any flower I ever smelt—sweeter than the magnolia, the double jonquil, the tuberose—anything. There are three thousand roses with names!!! chiefly French. 'T'other day I found a golden beetle in a York and Lancaster rose, and counted above thirty glowworms in a lovely lane between our house and Mr. Palmer's. Five were close together—a constellation on the grass—earthly

* Sergeant Talfourd's 'Ion.'

stars, really lighting the place. This, with the bee-bird, makes out more of summer than ought to belong to this cold weather. I heard a pretty story of a bird the other day. A friend of mine at Dover left a rare Indian bird hanging in a cage by an open window. Her house on the esplanade faces the sea. On her return she found another bird of the same species perched on the top of the cage, quite tame and gentle. All inquiries after its owner failed, and they suppose that it had escaped from some vessel, having been brought over for the purpose of traffic, and had been guided by some strange instinct to the captive of its own land.

God bless you!

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, Dec. 24, 1834.

MY DEAR EMILY,

Did you ever read Victor Hugo's 'Notre Dame?' *That* is, in my mind, the most extraordinary work of this age, with all its painfulness; and Victor Hugo and Daniel O'Connell are the only two persons (not friends) whom I would cross the threshold to meet. My passion for Daniel is extraordinary—fed and fostered, certainly, by some delightful Irish people who have bought our old house, Captain Edward Gore, R.N., son of the late and brother of the present Earl of Arran. The Liberator does seem to me a most wonderful person, full of power of every sort, and, I should think, very kind and genial. I certainly, the next time I go to London, will manage to get acquainted with him.

Mr. Sergeant Talfourd is growing in fame and in

income. They say that he makes 5000*l.* or 6000*l.* a year now, and he has refused requisitions to stand from Derby and Bridgnorth, and another offer to be brought into Parliament at no expense from a quarter which would be to him more tempting than all—his native town of Reading. But he declines at present, for fear of putting Mr. Palmer to expense or endangering his seat.

My chrysanthemums have been, and many of them still are, very splendid; one especially, a small, but most rich and regular flower, called the button white, is, I really think, as beautiful a plant as blows. It is of the purest white, whiter even than the larger and looser flower called the paper white; whiter than a lily, and of singular compactness and beauty of form. Do you know it? I have six kinds of white chrysanthemums, and about seventeen varieties in all. I wonder if I could send you any slips or cuttings, or bits with roots to them, in the spring. My finest flowers have been on cuttings not taken from the plant till late in June, or early in July. Indeed, I believe that none are taken till the latter month. This is quick work, is it not? My geraniums look very promising, and I do heartily wish that you could see my garden. It has been so much altered this year, that Emma would not know it again.

God bless you, my very dear love! Tell Mr. Smith, with my kindest compliments, how very much I value his good opinion; all the more because I owe it to the kind representations of one of the friends whom I love best in the world.

I am ever, my own dear Emily,

Most faithfully yours,

M. R. Mitford.

CHAPTER III.

LETTERS FOR 1835.

To DR. MITFORD, *King Street, Cheapside.*

Three Mile Cross, Feb. 1, 1835.

I WRITE one line, my dear father, just to tell you that I have to-day an unexpected visitor, in the shape of an artist, sent by George Whittaker, to take views for an edition of 'Our Village' with eighteen plates. I tell you this because it may be good to know in your negotiation with Bentley. God bless you!

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To DR. MITFORD, *King Street, Cheapside.*

Three Mile Cross, Feb. 3, 1835.

You would be very much astonished, my dearest father, at my hasty note yesterday, but not more than I was to receive a letter from George Whittaker, begging to introduce the bearer, Mr. Baxter, as a gentleman whom he had employed to illustrate a new edition of 'Our Village,' and requesting me to point out the subjects. Finding that the illustrations were to consist of eighteen splendidly finished woodcuts (for I never saw engravings on copper more beautifully finished), we consulted, and agreed to sally forth immediately in quest of the most desirable scenes. Accordingly I took him to Serle's mill, which, by Mr. Terry's help and mine, he

has contrived to sketch *just as it was*, and a beautiful design it makes; then to old Hodge's, he wanting to do a bit of the parsonage for a background to a scene in 'The Vicar's Maid;' then to George Dawson's fishing-house, from the water, which will be most beautiful. I went in at Hodge's and called at the Smiths, who asked me and the artist to dinner to meet the Walters. However, of course, I declined; but after making these three drawings we came home in the dark, and I gave him your bed for the night, chiefly to save time in the morning, he being (as artists generally are) a very respectable, nice man. To-day Martha made him an early breakfast; and he has taken sketches of the village from both ends; a sketch of the garden from the green-house, of the church, of a scene on the common for a snow-storm, of an old house (the Gore's), of the bridge by Smith's for 'Jessy Lucas,' and, lastly and chiefly, an incomparable likeness of dear Dash, who is to be represented, on a larger scale than the other things, with the two magpies. We have also agreed on the other subjects; and I got him an early dinner, and have sent him off into Reading to get somehow or other to Windsor to-night. He wanted to take a view of the Castle to-morrow, for another work on which he is engaged. I gave him a bottle of Mr. Goodlake's claret, instead of port, and took all the care of him I could. He is very civil indeed, and has promised me some India proofs of the cuts. By-the-by they are not to be great pictures, filling the page, but beautifully finished vignettes, printed on the same page either with the title or the beginnings of the articles. This, he says, is the present fashion for illustrating books. He is the man so much talked of in the 'Athenæum,' as the inventor of the new art of printing in colours, imitating oil paintings

by engravings on wood. He has promised to send me a specimen; and we have had some talk of bringing out a Book of Flowers in that way, if Whittaker will agree for it. It would be beautiful; but of course that is Mr. Whittaker's affair.

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

[A letter to Mr. Henry Phillips, dated April 10th, 1835, refers to Miss Mitford's opera of 'Sadak and Kalascade,' which had been accepted by Mr. Arnold for the Lyceum Theatre. It was produced on the 20th of April in this year.]

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, May 18, 1835.

I write immediately, my ever dearest Emily, to say that we shall avail ourselves of the knowledge that plants can reach you safely, to send three or four pots with little geraniums (last year's cuttings), and the white chrysanthemum which you have not, and which the gardeners hereabouts call the button-white. I hope that it will blow well. It is to other white chrysanthemums what the little Banksia rose is to other roses—only that the colour is as pure as milk, as lilies, as snow. I have not yet quite settled what geraniums to send; of course my best, but I am not quite sure which are my best. At present I meditate sending a "Miss Mitford," or rather one of the "Miss Mitfords," for there are several so called; it being a pretty proof of the way in which gardeners estimate my love of flowers, that they are constantly calling plants after me, and sending me one of the first cuttings as presents. There is a dahlia now selling at ten guineas a root under my name; I have not seen the flower, but have just had

one sent me (a cutting), which will of course blow in the autumn.

I have your book of 'Irishmen and Irishwomen,' dearest; but I fear it would be dangerous to send that with the flowers. You must come and fetch it yourself. Yes, I know the beautiful tree peony, the lovely Indian-looking flower, so gorgeously oriental, and like the old rich Chinese paper which one sees in houses fitted up eighty years ago. What a size yours must have been! The camellias now-a-days and the rhododendrons and azaleas, and the hybrids between the rhododendrons and azaleas, are really wonderful; I have seen plants that have been sold for twenty guineas, and which to rich people are fairly worth the money. The most beautiful of either tribe that I ever saw is a large buff azalea of matchless elegance, still very rare. But, after all, I like geraniums better than anything; and it is lucky that I do, since they are comparatively easy to rear and manage, and do not lay one under any tremendous obligation to receive, for I never buy any. All my varieties (amounting to at least three hundred different sorts) have been either presents, or exchanges, or my own seedlings—chiefly exchanges; for when once one has a good collection, that becomes an easy mode of enlarging it; and it is one pleasant to all parties, for it is a very great pleasure to have a flower in a friend's garden. You, my own Emily, gave me my first plants of the potentilla, and very often as I look at them I think of you. You must send me some little seed in a letter, as a return for these plants, seeds of your own gathering and from your own garden; and it shall go hard but I will make them grow: any seed that you think pretty.

Well, now we will talk of 'Belford Regis.' I pre-

sume that it has succeeded, since all my London correspondents speak of it as a *great* success; and the papers, so far as I have seen, prefer it to 'Our Village,' finding no other fault than that the picture of life which it exhibits is too bright and sunny—a fault which you will not quarrel with. In my opinion it is overloaded with civil notes, and too full of carelessnesses and trifling repetitions, which results, I suppose, from its having been sent up at different times; having been first intended to appear in one volume, then in two, and now turning out three volumes. Nevertheless, I myself prefer it to my other prose works, both as bolder and more various and deeper in sentiment, and as containing one character (a sort of embodiment of the strong sense and right feeling which I believe to be common in the middling classes, emphatically *the people*) which appears and re-appears in several of the stories, giving comfortable proof of the power to carry on a strongly distinguished character through three volumes which, if I do comply (as I suppose I must) with Mr. Bentley's desire for a novel, will be very valuable. This personage, who is neither more nor less than Stephen Law, the butcher, is the chief favourite of the Duke of Devonshire; for it is remarkable that the very great nobility, the real leaders of fashion, always delight in the simple and the true, and leave the trash called fashionable novels to their would-be imitators. As a single story, I prefer 'Hester.' Tell me your real and frank opinion of the book, and Mr. Smith's, and point out faults with the freedom of a friend.

Mr. Whittaker is about to bring out a new edition (the fourteenth of the *first* volume) of the whole five volumes of 'Our Village,' a very beautiful edition, ornamented with woodcuts of admirable softness and beauty; amongst

them a portrait of Dash, who is quite well, thank you, and as beautiful as ever. My dear father is also well. I am tolerably well after being shut up all the winter, but, at first getting about, had a severe bilious attack.

Mr. Talfourd has taken a violent fancy to Mr. O'Connell. I must tell you what he says of him in a letter to me: "In the meanwhile I quite love O'Connell. He has been most kind and attentive to me, and most expressive of gratitude for my attempt to show my interest for his country. He has all the fascination which is attributed to Napoleon, with the advantage to us mere thinkers, which genius has when it appeals to passion rather than to action. That he is a great man nobody can pretend to doubt; and I am equally persuaded that he is a good one. If he be not, then God and nature do not write truly." Are not these strong expressions? I myself have taken a violent fancy to the Liberator, the more perhaps since I have seen many Irish papers from our friends the Gores—a charming Irish family, between Whigs and Radicals and thorough O'Connellites; and they say, and I believe, that the best chance for the payment of the income of the Irish clergy is to have justice done to the Irish people. You cannot think how strongly they have excited my interest for Ireland, and for O'Connell. If it were not for leaving my father (who would never do to travel, some interests are necessary to him, justicing, gardening, and so forth)—if it were not for that strong and precious tie, I would go to see you and make a pilgrimage to Derrynane, and write a pretty book about the Emerald Isle.

Write to me soon, and long, and often, and tell me anything that comes in your way about Mr. O'Connell.

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To Sir William Elford, *Totnes.*

Three Mile Cross, June 1, 1835.

I thank you very much, my ever dear and kind friend, for your kind letter, and I rejoice that you like my book. It has been most favourably received, and is, I find, reckoned my best; although, when one considers that 'Our Village' has passed through fourteen large editions in England, and nearly as many in America, one can hardly expect an increase of popularity, and has only to hope for an equal success for any future production. My chief advantage in novel writing will be, that I shall be able to go higher and lower than Miss Austen, and to embrace all ranks of English life, as Scott did of Scottish. Not, of course, meaning to compare my works with those of either of the great novelists of our time. What the present race is like I really do not know; not having read a novel (except Victor Hugo's magnificent 'Notre Dame de Paris') for these last three or four years.

I am in better health, and therefore in better spirits; but it is a weight under which all women sink—to support a family. Mrs. Hofland is very ill; Miss Landon is very ill; Mrs. Hall is very ill; Mrs. Hemans is dead; and such a catastrophe you will one day hear of your poor correspondent. What you suggest, my dear Sir William, would be most acceptable, and my father, whose mind and body are in full vigour, and who does at this moment nearly all the business of the county, would be most fit for the work, and would like it; but he is too old for the look of the thing, being now half way between seventy-four and seventy-five; and I believe there is a rule not to appoint any one who has not been called to the bar. So I must trust in Pro-

vidence to have sufficient strength of mind and body to support us by my own efforts.

We have lost our neighbour, Mr. Milman, who has got a London living. It is quite right that he should be promoted; but I would rather have lost a hundred stupid acquaintances than one friend so entirely after my own fashion; although we are fortunate in our neighbours, having many very kind ones. God bless you, my dear Sir William! Kindest regards to all.

Ever very faithfully and affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, June 13, 1835.

Since you are so kindly interested in my book, my dear Emily, perhaps you will like to hear that the story of the 'Old Emigré' (I mean the poor Abbé's murder) is true up to the point of discovery. The Bagman was apprehended, and my father, who, as chairman of the Reading bench, gave much time and attention to the task of searching out the criminal, always thought, from the gown wound round the hilt of the sword, and other indications, that he was guilty; but the fact could not be brought home to him. I saw him when in prison. He was perhaps the handsomest and finest-made man I ever beheld—like Charles Kemble at thirty. The whole of the story belonging to the Duvals is fictitious; but I took the description of Louis, as a boy, from the son of a distant relation of my own, which relation, by-the-by (except in the fact of being an heiress) is the actual heroine of the story of 'The Dissenting Minister.' It is almost literally true. Perhaps you will like to hear a bit of praise which gratified me much. Mary Howitt, the Quaker poetess, says that the account of

the development of intellect in the heroine of 'The Dissenting Minister' might pass for the history of her own mind, and that I must have lived much amongst rigid Dissenters to give so exact a picture of the goings on in the interior of their families. Now, I don't remember ever to have been in such a house in my life. My cousin, a rigid Independent, did in that way captivate and fall in love with a *naval* (not a military) officer, on his parole, in a small town in Hampshire. He was exchanged, but at the peace he came to fetch her, and she is now living with him at Bayonne, he holding the post of captain of the port. I often talk of going to see her, only I never go anywhere. She is a most superior woman, and when in England two years ago she brought with her the most elegant and graceful boy I ever beheld, the prototype of Louis Duval. I used to call him the queen's page. 'The Sailor's Wedding' is also literally true, except the description at the end—for he married his wife knowing her to be an heiress—and his early history is exactly narrated. I have not made this confession to anybody else; because, if one owns to one piece of truth as to pleasant characters, people forthwith find originals for those who are less so. Poor Jack and Stephen Law are not portraits, but an embodiment of my notion of an English sailor and of a sturdy honest tradesman, who has made his own fortune by strong sense and good principle.

What a delightful work you have sent me! I read it to our excellent Irish neighbours and friends, Captain and Mrs. Gore, and they were delighted. I must give you a trait of Captain Gore, who is a very handsome man of thirty-eight or forty; very clever; very well acquainted with the world, having belonged (and still, indeed, belonging) to the household of the Duke of

Sussex, and kept the best company amongst the Whig leaders; but who is the simplest-hearted, best-natured, happiest, merriest, kindest, husband, and father, and friend that ever trod this earth. His sweet wife, also a woman of extraordinary ability and cultivation, has taken to us just as he has done. So that they are such neighbours as the dear Crowthers were; although, being poor for their rank, they avoid the dinner-parties of the neighbourhood. Well, Captain Gore is, amongst his other excellences, a great mechanic and a capital working carpenter. One Sunday lately—last Sunday week—they were sitting in my greenhouse and contemplating the splendid pyramid of two hundred geraniums before the door, withering, poor dears, in the sun, and afraid of a thunder-shower; and we all began lamenting for the hundredth time that we could not devise a canvas awning to shelter them. "Can't it be done in wood?" said Captain Gore; "anything may be done in wood. We must stop a week and build a roof to let up and down by blocks, sailor fashion. I'll come to-morrow, and see what we can devise—to-morrow or Tuesday." "Not Tuesday, dear Captain Gore," said I, "for I am going out as early as twelve o'clock; come to-morrow." To-morrow arrived, and no news of Captain Gore; and we took for granted that the thing had been thought over and found impracticable; but on Tuesday, when I returned from my round of visits, I found the captain and six men erecting the machine, which is really the most serviceable and beautiful canopy ever devised. A child can let it down and pull it up. It completely covers the two hundred plants, and is highly ornamental. There he sat in his glory upon the mast-head, adjusting the blocks and ropes; having devised the whole, and having actually made the greater part with his own hands.

Now, don't you love Captain Gore? just as I love your dear uncle, and the bishop, and Mrs. Brinkley, and your brothers and sisters, for your dear sake. You could not be more in my heart than you always were; but you are certainly more and more in my head, because I am always now thinking and talking of Ireland.

God bless you, my dearest! What a letter!

Always yours,
M. R. M.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr.*

Three Mile Cross, Sept. 3, 1835.

I send you, my dearest Emily, the four white œnotheras, the blue pea, the *Salpiglossis picta*, the white Clarkia, a new lupine, the most beautiful that I have ever seen, similar to the *Lupinus mutabilis*, in kind and fragrance, but a clear lilac and clear white, and of far larger spikes of flowers (I enclose a flower), a new annual chrysanthemum (Cape marigold) with yellow outer leaves, and two little packets of seeds from Madeira, sent me by a gentleman whom I have never either seen or even heard of till now, but who, having been ordered there for his health, took my books with him, and found them of so much amusement to him that he sent me some seeds on his arrival by way of return, and we are likely to become great friends. Did I tell you that I had met at an Irish neighbour's (Mr. Fitzgerald's) an Honourable Mr. Robert Talbot, brother to Mrs. Fitzgerald and husband to my cousin Arabella Ogle (sister to Lady Dacre and first cousin to the last Mr. Sheridan)—the nearest relative I have in the world, except my dear father, and one whom I had never seen before? I cannot tell you how pleased I was, and so

was she. "Blood is warmer than water," especially amongst north country bodies; and her husband being one of the thirteen translators of 'Faust'—and by very far the best—and having also printed for private distribution a very fine translation of Schiller's 'William Tell,' we were friends of course. I tell you this because I know you like to know anything that pleases me. Have you read her niece, Mrs. Sullivan's, 'Tales of the Peerage and the Peasantry,' edited by her mother, Lady Dacre? She, too, is my cousin (we are all authors and authoresses). I think the tales true, and pretty, and good—not like the common run of fashionable nonsense. I am very busy, having engaged to write for 'Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.' It is one of the signs of the times, that a periodical selling for three halfpence should engage so high-priced a writer as myself; but they have a circulation of 200,000 or 300,000 Do you know it? It is excellent.

Give my kindest respects to Mr. Smith, and to the Bells, whom I feel to be my friends. Heaven bless you, my dearest!

Ever faithfully yours,
M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross [No date. Autumn of 1835].

MY DEAREST EMILY,

An American of the highest class, and the highest talent (Mr. Ticknor, of Boston, who visited me the other day in his way from London to Dublin), assured me that in London, even at such houses as Lord Lansdowne's and Lord Grey's, they think no more about Ireland than they do of St. Kitts, or any other trifling colony. The acute American added that in his country the fate of the one island was considered to depend altogether

upon the good government, the settlement, the complete pacification of the other. I wish you might see the Ticknors, who were to visit Miss Edgeworth. They are most charming persons—intimate friends of the two great Americans, Mr. Webster, the orator, and Dr. Channing, the Unitarian preacher—perhaps (with the single exception of your great countryman) the most eloquent men now living.

Do you ever see the London weekly literary journal called the 'Athenæum?' It is the fashionable paper now, having superseded the 'Literary Gazette.' It has such a circulation that, although published at the small price of fourpence, the income derived from it by the proprietor is said to be more than 4000*l.* per annum. Well, in the number of the Saturday before last, there is an account of a 'Visit to Our Village,' by William Howitt, the Quaker Poet (it is only signed 'H.,' but I know by circumstances that it must be his), which (except in the overpraise, which you will pardon) is at once so pretty and so kind, and, to a certain point, so true, that I should really like you to see it. The praise does not describe me as I am, because I fall far short of the picture; but it is just how I should wish to be—and how very seldom does that happen! In general, people compliment you upon possessing qualities that you do not wish to possess; but both Mary Howitt and her husband are remarkable people. Surely you have read their 'Book of the Seasons.'

[*The rest of this letter is wanting.*]

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr.*

Three Mile Cross, Sept. 20, 1835.

I take the chance, my own dear Emily, of your not having the enclosed seed. The *Polyphillus lupine* is

beautiful, but not fragrant. It blows in May, bearing spikes of flowers as thick together as possible—the one sort of a bright rich purple, the other of a very pure white. We had one plant last spring, of which the spikes were above forty in number, and many of them from three quarters of a yard to a yard long. It was new ground, and a southern aspect; but it is almost always a magnificent plant, with its palm-like leaves, in the middle of which (the last stalk from which they spread) a drop of rain will stand and shine like a diamond. It is often raised by parting the roots, but we always propagate it by seed. It blows the second year constantly, and often the first; and we think it prospers better than from the root. The little blue lobelia is beautiful in masses; we have a border of it under the white jessamine at the end of the greenhouse, where it is mixed with tufts of scarlet verbena—or rather the tufts of scarlet verbena are set amongst the lobelia, and they have been for three months covered with innumerable bright flowers, and will remain so till the frost. The seeds must be sown in a pot in the hotbed early in the spring, and set out while still very small, and really their delicate strength is wonderful. The dark nasturtium is a fine colour, and very luxuriant; and the new Marvel of Peru has a long white tube, which is sweet in the open air and pretty.

I dare say you have these flowers, but I send them upon the chance. So, too, I dare say you have the white petunia (which grows better from seed than from cuttings; the purple petunia I am afraid does not seed); the Virginia flax, a pretty perennial (is not sending flax to Ireland something like sending coals to Newcastle?); and the *Hybiscus Africanus*, which is, by-the-way, one of my pet flowers. I know nothing more beautiful than the dark eye

contrasted with the mellow, yellowish white of the sect of the petals. The moth mullein—for that is its true name—is full of seed, but it is not yet ripe; I shall certainly send you the first that is ready. It is pretty, and I love it all the better because my father is so fond of it. I wish I knew whether I have anything else you would like. I have above seventy sorts of seed done up in little packets in one of the baskets that foreign-dried fruits come in, and they look so tidy and old-maidish that I can't help laughing when I look at them. Would you like seed of the scarlet geranium? By-the-way, our tuberoses this year were superb; I never saw any so large, or half so large—just like flowers carved out of marble. I suppose the hot, dry weather suited them. I am to have some Madeira lily roots from Mr. Blewitt. Do you know the Madeira lily? It is a species of the Belladonna, a bright pink.

We grieve over the rejection of the Irish Church Bills last year and this. *Here* it is almost universally said (by at least nine cultivated people out of ten) that the clergy are ruined by their pretended friends the Tories in the House of Lords; that Government and O'Connell meant them most fairly; and that to pacify the country, by establishing the principle of political equality to all forms of religion, at the least possible loss to the Protestant Church, was their settled intention. In England it is said that the Irish incumbents would probably have been very glad to have accepted the terms offered last year, had they not been swayed by the Irish bishops.

I have just had a letter from Miss Sedgwick (the American lady novelist), and her last book, 'The Linwoods,' is on its way to me. The motto is from my 'Rienzi.' I like Miss Sedgwick's letters. This is full

of Miss Martineau, to whom I gave a letter to Miss Sedgwick, and who seems to have delighted them much during two long visits which she has paid to them. She (Miss Martineau) is coming to me on her return from America. How I do wish you could meet her! But we shall meet, I am sure of that, some day or other; ardent wishes realize themselves. Some day or other you and I shall meet again. Mrs. Trollope is in Italy, meaning to write her travels there next year. Her new novel is said to be clever, but not agreeable; I have not read it. Read, if you can, the 'Life of Sir James Mackintosh;' it is very, very interesting. I knew him, and a most delightful man he was.

God bless you, my dear love! My father's affectionate remembrances, and my respectful ones to Mr. Smith. I hope you are quite well.

Ever yours,
M. R. M.

To the Rev. William Harness, *Heathcote Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Oct. 19, 1835.

I have seen Mr. Talfourd to-day and delivered Mr. Wordsworth's message, with which he was much gratified. It was singular that I had also heard this very day, from a friend travelling in Switzerland, how anxious Sismondi was to see the whole of his fine play; and that a similar message arrived by the same post from Lord Holland, &c. All this is intensely gratifying.

Never was man more mistaken than you are, as to his feeling towards yourself. He always speaks of you with enthusiasm—admires, respects, esteems, and loves you. I am sure of this. But I can quite understand that there is something in his manner which makes you doubt it. I sometimes doubt myself whether he likes

me, until I find him not only persevering in all manner of kindness, but coming to me and clinging to my society in a way that no one does who does not love one. It is manner. His *abord*, though soft and gentle, is at once too smooth and too cold. He does not know how to shake hands (shall I offer to teach him?), and has a way of stopping serious talk by some out-of-season jest —some mere play upon words, which, to me who love above all things good faith and simplicity in conversation, is more provoking than I have words to tell. Are not these the things that have made you doubt his regard? Unless you have stronger reasons do not give him up.

Mr. Haydon dined with us on Saturday, and was most kind to young Edmund Havell, who dined here to meet him—instructing him to finish the portrait of a boy as if he had been his own son. We had great talk of his fresco, which I saw when I was in town. It resists any wet, like china; being done upon *wet* mortar and drying in. Only peculiar colours (earths) can be used. It seems to me very extraordinary that the first English artist who has made the attempt should have succeeded on his first trial. No depth can be given—no shadow. Still there are a certain class of subjects, chiefly from the Greek mythology, where only light and air are required for the background, which will be beautiful—an Assembly of the Gods, for instance, the Deification of Psyche, Aurora and the Hours, the Car of Venus, the Chariot of the Sun. It cannot be retouched; so that only a man as certain of his drawing as Mr. Haydon could succeed.

The subject of his present sketch is Uriel; and it is exquisitely bright, light, and ethereal—a presence. I should like you to see it. In these days of railways

and steam engines, a restored art, a new medium of beauty is worth looking at. Haydon himself is a very brilliant person, full of talent and fire and conversational power. His lectures are splendid things.

In this year's 'Keepsake' is a very fine poem, 'Upper Austria,' by my friend Mr. Kenyon, composed because, from feelings of giddiness, he feared his head was attacked. He composed these verses (not writing them until the poem of four hundred or five hundred lines was complete) as a test. It turned out that the stomach was deranged, and he was set to rights in no time.

God bless you, my ever dear and kind friend!

Most faithfully and affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To SIR WILLIAM ELFORD, *The Priory, Totnes.*

Three Mile Cross, Oct. 20, 1835.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

One change Lady Adams* must expect in sending her eldest hope to a public school—that he who went a boy will return a man; for anything so precocious as the young gentlemen who emerge from Eton, Harrow, and Westminster (I know less of William of Wykeham's disciples) one shall seldom see on a summer's day. Nevertheless, although the change be at first a little startling, I believe that it wears away, and that the lads turn out no worse than than their shy, bashful, awkward predecessors of thirty years ago.

Yes, the rose beetle is of a burnished golden green. It comes in hot summers, and only in hot summers, in company with tribes of glowworms, and flights of small

* Sir William Elford's daughter.

blue butterflies, and death's-head moths and large green dragon-flies, and the thrice-beautiful *Sphinx ligustri*, or, as the common people prettily call it, the bee-bird. Another characteristic of this hot, dry summer has been the manner in which the large humble-bees (vulgarly dumbledoms) have forced open, torn apart, the buds of my geraniums; an operation I never saw them perform before. Another novelty of this season has been, that the splendid new annual, the *Salpiglossis picta*, has, after the first crop of blossoms, produced perfect seed without flower petals, a proof (if any were needed) that the petals which constitute the beauty of a flower are not necessary to its propagation.

I am again suffering from nervous rheumatism in the face. It came on with the change of the weather first, as it did last year; and I suppose that nothing but a continued residence in a hot climate (which is out of the question with me) would remove it. My father, I thank Heaven, is well, and joins me in kindest regards to all near Totnes.

Ever, my dear friend, very faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

CHAPTER IV.

Letters for 1836.

To the Rev. William Harness, *London.*

Three Mile Cross, Feb. 4, 1836.

My dear Friend,

We rejoice to find you so much recovered. My father was in town last week to dispose of a novel (I mean, to make an agreement for one, for it is not yet nearly written), and called at your house, where he saw the two Maries, but missed you. He has agreed with Saunders & Otley for 700*l.* (seven hundred), a liberal price as times go. It is to be printed by September. I shall try my very best.

Mr. H. F. Chorley is doing a life—literary life and correspondence—of poor Mrs. Hemans, partly for the benefit of her boys. I know him only by correspondence, and by the introduction of my admirable friend Mary Howitt; but she speaks so highly of him, and his own letters so completely confirm the impression, that I feel assured that I have not done amiss in referring him either to you or Mr. Milman for the account of 'The Vespers of Palermo.' I never in my life saw any letters so thoroughly full of good feeling, right-minded and high-minded, as those of this very clever young man. If you can help him to any letters of Mrs. Hemans, I am sure you will.

How are the Milmans? and dear Mr. Kenyon, how is he? If you hear of the Queen Adelaide let me know; and believe me,

Ever most faithfully yours,
M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, April 29, 1836.

Yes, my dear love, the anemones are doubtless mine, for mine of the same seed sown at the same time are in full bloom. They are hardly red enough to please me, for I like them to be of the brightest colours, and most of mine are pale, of very pretty shades, pink and lilac and white, and some red and crimson, and many purple; but not the blaze of scarlet that I like in anemones. I want them to look like an old window of stained glass, or like my own geraniums in their summer glow, for there is nothing so bright as they are—except in the garden of Aladdin, where the blossoms were of rubies and amethysts—and so you would say if you saw them in Jnne.

By-the-way, there is a most beautiful poem on the blue anemone in poor Mrs. Hemans's posthumous volume, which I have just received from her sister, Mrs. Hughes (the composer of the 'Captive Knight,' and other songs of hers), together with a very interesting letter. On her dying bed Mrs. Hemans used to recur to my descriptions of natural scenery, and meant if she had lived to have inscribed to me a volume of prose recollections, which she intended to have published. This would have been a very high honour; but perhaps there is a quiet, sad, serene, gratification in the private consciousness of such an intention, even more gratifying than the public distinction, and certainly more pure. She was a charming woman; and so is my friend Mary

Howitt. By-the-way, I had a most gratifying letter from her the other day, with an account of Mr. O'Connell's visit to Nottingham. She speaks of Mrs. O'Connell with enthusiasm, as exactly fit for the wife of such a man. I always thought highly of her, because we so heard little about her. You will know what I mean.

Ever, my dear love,
Most faithfully yours,
M. R. M.

P.S. I am going to town (56, Russell Square) the 20th of next month, and shall stay a week or ten days.

To DR. MITFORD, *Three Mile Cross.*

Wednesday night. 56, Russell Square.
May 25, 1836.

MY VERY DEAREST FATHER,

On arriving here, I found everything very comfortable, and everybody seemingly delighted to see me, although much disappointed not to see you, whom it seems they had expected. At dinner we had Mr. Stanfield, the painter, who is charming, and talks of coming to take *my* country; Mr. Chorley, who is also charming; Mr. Sergeant Goulbourn, stupid enough; some other lawyers (names unknown), ditto, ditto; Mr. Crosse (or some such name), a very nice young man of *your* sessions, an old scholar of Dr. Valpy's, (do you know whom I mean?); William Harness and his sisters; some sisters, nieces, and cousins of Mrs. Talfourd, and last and best, Erskine Perry, who is charming. And, indeed, Stanfield and Mr. Chorley were equally charming. Oh, dear me! what a pleasant thing it is to have five or six such men talking to one all the evening. How different from the country! Dear William Harness

is getting quite strong upon his feet; he is, of course, as delightful and affectionate as ever. He does not go to see 'Ion' to-morrow, but joins us at supper, where, by-the-way, there will not be above sixty people. Mr. Wordsworth and Mr. Landor dine with us, and Milman, Proctor, Rogers, &c. All the poets and leading *literati* in town sup here. I found a note from Lady Meux, informing me that her cousin, Marianne Skerrett, is still in Naples, and inviting me to go and see her ladyship either in town or at Theobalds, where she now is for this week of recess. She is a near connection and friend of the Broughams, you know.

Thursday morning.

Mrs. Trollope and her son have been here—she looking exceedingly well; and Mr. Blewitt, a little delicate person; and Mr. Kenyon (God bless him!), who is coming for me to-morrow to show me the giraffes, &c., and who is more charming than ever. I am expecting, amongst other persons, Miss Jane Porter and the Countess Montalembert, who was Miss Forbes; and I close this letter for fear of a tribe of people coming. We are quite well; I trust that you are so.

Ever, most affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To DR. MITFORD, *Three Mile Cross.*

56, Russell Square, May 26, 1836.

Mr. Wordsworth, Mr. Landor, and Mr. White dined here. I like Mr. Wordsworth of all things; he is a most venerable-looking old man, delightfully mild and placid, and most kind to me. Mr. Landor is a very striking-looking person, and exceedingly clever. Also we had a Mr. Browning, a young poet (author of 'Para-

celsus'), and Mr. Proctor, and Mr. Chorley, and quantities more of poets, &c. Stanfield and Lucas were also there, and young Brown, Lord Jeffrey's nephew, who says that he misses you beyond description. Archdeacon Wrangham is not in London. Mr. Willis has sailed for America. Mr. Moore and Miss Edgeworth are not in town.

Mr. Crabb Robinson is to come and have a gossip with me to-morrow. We *had* a pretty good gossip to-night. We meet Henry Hope and Mr. Dyce, amongst others, to-morrow, at William Harness's. Henry Hope, they say here, has 80,000*l.* per annum—a pretty little income!—and is just as unaffected as he was when we saw him there. You cannot think how much I like Ellen Tree and Stanfield; so would you.

There was a curious affair to-night: all the sergeants went to the play* in a body, and sat in one box, except Mr. Sergeant Wilde, who had a box for himself and family. Lord Grey and his family were in a private box just opposite to us; and the house was filled with people of that class in the boxes, and the pit crammed with gentlemen. Very, very gratifying, was it not?

God bless you, my own dearest dear! I am tired to death, and must go to bed.

I have just had your dear letter, and rejoice to find that you are so well. I will write to-morrow, and tell you all the news of the day.

Mr. Sergeant has forgotten to bring me a frank, and I am full of bustle.

Heaven bless you, my dearest! Love to dear, dear Dash.

Ever faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

* To see Sergeant Talfourd's 'Ion.'

To Dr. Mitford, *Three Mile Cross.*

Russell Square, May 27, 1836.

I told you, my dearest father, that Mr. Kenyon was to take me to the giraffes and the Diorama, with both of which I was delighted. A sweet young woman, whom we called for in Gloucester Place, went with us—a Miss Barrett—who reads Greek as I do French, and has published some translations from Æschylus, and some most striking poems. She is a delightful young creature; shy and timid and modest. Nothing but her desire to see me got her out at all, but now she is coming to us to-morrow night also.

We just missed poor Mrs. Hofland, but I hope to call upon her to-morrow, having commissioned William Harness to get me a fly, that I may go and see Mrs. Callcott (from whom I have a most charming note) and Miss Joy (from whom I have also heard), and the Dilkes, Allan Cunningham, Erskine Perry, Chantry, and Westmacott to see Mr. Perry's monument. A fly, they say, is cheaper than a glass coach, and quite as respectable, and I could not otherwise manage the matter.

Monday and Tuesday, William and Mr. Chorley are to take me to exhibitions. We had at William Harness's Wordsworth, Mr. Hope, Mr. Dyce, Mr. Chorley, Miss Sotherby (you knew her father, a friend of the Ogles—she is to meet me at Lady Dacre's), and a heap more of ladies and gentlemen; amongst the rest Mr. Knight, a very clever artist, who wants to take my portrait, in order to rescue his brother artists from the disgrace of the caricatures which have been taken of me. William says that the reason of his falling in love with me is, that I am so well dressed, and you will be glad to hear that our pains have not been thrown away, for I am just dressed like the

fashionable people at the other end of the town, and really it is pleasant that it should be so. We had a delightful dinner, only dimmed by poor Mr. Chorley's distress. He has had another affliction, for Mary Howitt's book turns out to be a dead failure. He is a charming young man. We had loads of other visitors, both before and after my departure to the Zoological Gardens. Everybody is more kind to me than you can imagine. All the naughty ladies were at our play, Lady B——, Mrs. N——, &c., &c. I wish you had been there. Am I not very good in writing? If you knew the immense concourse of people who are thronging here, you would think so. Heaven bless you! Love to Dash and all friends.

Ever most fondly your own,

M. R. MITFORD.

To DR. MITFORD, *Three Mile Cross.*

Russell Square, May 28 and 29, 1836.

MY DEAREST FATHER,

Our dinner at Mr. Kenyon's (to which I went with the Harnesses) was magnificent. Mr. Wordsworth, whom I *love*—he is an adorable old man—Mr. Landor—who is as splendid a person as Mr. Kenyon, but not so full of sweetness and sympathy—the charming Miss Barrett, Mr. Courtenay, and three or four more, came to dinner; one of the most magnificent dinners I ever saw; a much finer house and finer style than while Mrs. Kenyon lived.

Miss Barrett has translated the most difficult of the Greek plays (the 'Prometheus Bound'), and written most exquisite poems in almost every style. She is so sweet and gentle, and so pretty, that one looks at her as if she were some bright flower; and she says it is like a dream that she should be talking to me, whose works she

knows by heart. You cannot imagine how very, very, very kindly Mr. Wordsworth speaks of my poor works. You, who know what I think of him, can imagine how much I am gratified by his praise. I find that half the literary world is invited to meet me at Lady Dacre's.

To DR. MITFORD, *Three Mile Cross.*

Russell Square, May 30, 1836.

My darling will have found from my letters how we go on. Jerrold was here last night, and White, Crabb Robinson, Mr. Landor, Mr. Kenyon, Mr. Shepherd, Mr. Maule, and a thousand beside; and to-day first came Mrs. Lewis, and then, precisely at one, the Duke of Devonshire. He brought me a splendid nosegay of lilies of the valley (a thousand flowers without leaves—I hope I shall find mine in their prime) and moss roses, and stayed above two hours. You would hardly believe that Mrs. Talfourd came and sprawled and bawled, but could not make him hear. I *did*, most comfortably; and he must have been pleased, for he begged me never to come to London again without giving him the opportunity of enjoying a similar pleasure. Gave me an order to see Chiswick (containing, as he said, *that* most interesting to me—pictures and flowers), and regretted that he could not show it to me himself at present, which some day or other, he said, he hoped to do.

Then came Mr. Otley, then Lady Mary Shepherd, and some more people, whom you don't know; and then I went out to Mr. Barrett's, and to William Harness's, and to call upon Dora Smith, whom I took with me to call upon the Barneses. I just missed him, but found her most cordial, making a great point of my fixing a day to dine there; which I positively declined, though very civilly. I have refused at least thirty

invitations to dinner. Then I came home (still with Dora), and found that Mrs. Talfourd *had* dined, and meant me to have some tea! This, however, would not do, so I asked for a devil and a salad, and dressed and ate together, Dora helping. Then William Harness came to settle about our going to Lady Dacre's to-morrow, and to tell me that a servant (he believed Lord Lansdowne's) had been at his house to ask where I was to be found. (I had heard yesterday—I hardly know from whom—that Lord Lansdowne was inquiring about me.) Then came Mrs. Dupuy and William Ogbourn, to go with me to see Malibran. There was an immense house, and a still more immense enthusiasm. And, really, on comparing the matter, I had been deceived about the enthusiasm for 'Ion,' for that of to-night was incomparably greater, and the house as full. Malibran is a lovely creature, and an incomparable actress. *She* would be the only person for 'Inez;' and really I should like to write an opera for her.

By-the-way, this new fiddler, Ole Bull, who is beating Paganini, has taken one of the airs from *our* opera as the theme of one of his variations in the concert, which he gives once a week at the King's Theatre. All the artists say that the plans for the Houses of Lords and Commons are mere waste of time; indeed, no one talks of any of them, except Barry's, which we have in the 'Athenæum.' By-the-way that 'Athenæum' article is liked, for Talfourd thinks no praise half enough; talks still of acting the part himself at a small theatre; and would be capable of buying tickets to fill the house for a week provided he could in that way keep it going for that time at Covent Garden. You have no notion of our poor friend's tremendous inflation. It is specimen enough to say that he actually expressed to me great wonder that Lord

Lansdowne did not put off a dinner, which he is to have next Wednesday, and for which tickets have been out these six weeks, because 'Ion' is to be played a second time that night! Of me he is furiously jealous; so he is of Wordsworth; but more of me, because people come to his own house to see me, and walk up to me and crowd about me whilst he is in the room; and most of all is he jealous of Mr. Kenyon, who (Mrs. Callcott told me) is the most admired and courted man in town; and only see how kind he is to me!! I shall ask him to meet me at Chiswick, and take Wordsworth and Landor.

You can't imagine how well the Duke and I got on. He is a first-rate talker—he *must* be—for I am living in the midst now of all that is best of London conversation, and I have not met with any one who exceeds him: and there was not a moment's pause. I don't think I ever spoke more to my own satisfaction, which is a comfort. He spoke of Captain and Mrs. Gore as very amiable and agreeable. He asked if I knew any Derbyshire persons, which introduced the subject. I told him of Mrs. Forster's geraniums, and he means to go and see them. What a charming person he is! How I do long to see you and Dash. Mrs. Gore says you have had a party. This was very foolish, because I am certain I should have managed it much better than you, and I can't imagine what sort of cooking or dinner you would give them. Also I am dying for my Dash and my flowers. I hope the plastering and whitewashing is done; if not, get it done before I come. I shall certainly come on Friday. Good-bye, my dearest, as I never dare trust any one to put my letters into the post except Martha; they are so often forgotten here.

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To DR. MITFORD, *Three Mile Cross.*

Russell Square, May 31, 1836.
Tuesday night.

MY DEAREST FATHER,

At seven William came to take me to Lord Dacre's. It is a small house, with a round table that only holds eight. The company was William, Mrs. Joanna, Mrs. Sullivan (Lady Dacre's daughter, the authoress), Lord and Lady Dacre, a famous talker called Bobus Smith (otherwise the great Bobus), and my old friend Mr. Young, the actor, who was delighted to see me, and very attentive and kind indeed. But how kind they were all! Lady Dacre is still very handsome, and most charming, but is growing a little deaf. Their kindness no words can tell.

In the evening we had about fifty people; amongst others, Edwin Landseer, who invited himself to come and paint Dash. He is a charming person; recollected me instantly, and talked to me for two whole hours—that is to say, all the evening, for he took a post behind my chair, and never left it a moment. You may imagine that I was very gracious to the best dog painter that ever lived, who asked my leave to paint Dash. Pray tell Dash. Edwin Landseer says that it is the most beautiful and rarest race of dogs in existence—the dogs who have most intellect and most *countenance.* Stanfield had talked to him of his intention to paint my country, and then Edwin Landseer resolved to paint my dog. It is very odd that Mr Knight should want to paint *me*; and Mr. Lucas will make the most charming picture of all—*of you.* Of course you will understand that I have not sat to Mr. Knight, nor do I mean it; but it is a remarkable combination of compliments from four of the crack

artists of the exhibition, is it not? Altogether it was a delightful evening.

Talfourd is so devoured by jealousy at my reception that he does not even speak to me, and *to my certain knowledge* concealed from Lord Holland (Miss Fox told me so) that I am in town, and from Lord Lansdowne where I am.

William Harness says that the Lansdownes have been sending all about to find me out—of course to ask me to dinner to-morrow, when they have a party. William will *then* tell them where I am, but then it will be too late. Mr. Sergeant would not go to Lady Dacre's to-night, because it was a party made for me. He is really so inflated with vanity, and so bitter with envy, that you would not know him. He told me (when I said that the papers had been very far more favourable to him than to my plays) that I forgot *the difference!* And if you had seen the scorn with which he said it! He said worse to Jerrold.

Everybody says (so Mr. Kenyon tells me) that his head is completely turned with vanity. He won't go to the Shepherds, because Lady Mary came to secure me, and to make me fix the day. We have had no quarrel—no coolness, even, on *my* part. I behaved, at first, with the warmest and truest sympathy, until it was chilled by his bitter scorn; and since, thank Heaven! I have never lost my self-command—never ceased to behave to him with the most perfect politeness. But Mr. Kenyon observed the thing, and so did William; and he must change very much indeed before the old feeling will come back to me. You know that in our poor cottage he was a god. William Harness says he never saw any one received with such a mixture of enthusiasm and respect as I have been—not even Madame de Stäel.

Wordsworth, dear old man! aids it by his warm and approving kindness; and, only that it hurts and grieves me in my own feeling, Talfourd can injure nobody but himself by his unprecedented conduct.

To-morrow I go to Mr. Lucas's, the British Gallery, and dine at the Dilkes's; Thursday to Chiswick; and Edwin Landseer desires me to drive round by the Duke of Bedford's, Camden Hill—which I shall—and afterwards I dine with Lady Mary. God bless you, my very dearest father!

Ever most affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

How glad I shall be to see you once more, and my own home, and my own Dash!

To MISS JEPHSON, *Cheltenham.*

Three Mile Cross, June 19, 1836.

I was thinking of writing to you, my dear love, and am very glad to get your address, and to welcome you back to England, which seems a step towards myself. How I wish you were here at this moment! my garden is so exquisite; your recollection of it can convey nothing like the present beauty or the exquisite colour. It is so changed as to be almost a new thing as to beauty, and yet retaining the old character of close and stage-like scenery, like a back scene "at a play."

I spent ten days in London—ten days crowded with gratification. Wordsworth was there; I sat next him at dinner three following days, and had the pleasure of finding my old idolatry of the poet turned into a warm affection for the kind, simple, gracious man. We met also almost every morning; and I saw, on terms of the most agreeable intimacy, Lady Dacre, Lady Morgan, Lady Mary Shepherd, Mrs. Trollope, Mrs. Marcet, Mrs.

Callcott, Jane Porter, Joanna Baillie, and I know not how many other females of eminence, to say nothing of all the artists, poets, prosers, talkers, and actors of the day. With the artists I have particular reason to be pleased. Mr. Lucas, whose talent has ripened, and whose portraits this year are among the finest in the exhibition, is coming here to paint my father. I am now come home to work hard, if the people will let me; for the swarms of visitors and the countless packets of notes and letters which I receive surpass belief. A very clever young artist, Edmund Havell, whose talent in painting animals is really extraordinary, has been (and is) taking a likeness of Dash as large as life. Dash understands the affair, and makes an excellent sitter—very grave and dignified, and a little conscious—peeping stealthily at the portrait, as if afraid of being thought vain if he looked at it too long.

Edwin Landseer has a fine Newfoundland dog, whom he has often painted, and who is content to maintain his posture as long as his master keeps his palette in his hand, however long that may be; but the moment the palette is laid down, off darts Neptune, and will sit no more that day. Tell Mrs. Price this, if you see her—I mean about Dash's portrait—with my kind love, and that I cannot write yet awhile, being so busy.

You must let me know your whereabouts, and when I am likely to see you. God bless you! My father's love.

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, 74, *Gloucester Place.*

Three Mile Cross, June —, 1836.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

I sit down to write to you after a day of excitement and fatigue, which (it being now four o'clock in the

morning) ought to send me to bed; but my friend Mr. Chorley, who is, I am very sorry to say, going away to-morrow, will be the bearer of my letter and of a few flowers, and if he have the good luck to be let in, as I hope he may, will tell you all about our doings. He is worthy of the pleasure of seeing you, not merely in right of admiration of your poems, but because he is one of the most perfectly right-minded and high-minded persons that I have ever known.

To be sure I will come and see you when next I visit London, and I shall feel to know you better when I have had the pleasure of being introduced to Mr. Barrett; to be better authorized to love you and to take a pride in your successes—things which, at present, I take the liberty of doing without authority.

[Here follows an illegible paragraph of advice on the necessity of clearness of style.]

This is a terrible liberty from me to you, but I have seen so much high poetical faculty lost and buried from the one fault of obscurity, that I would impress upon every young writer the paramount necessity of clearness.

Use your interest with Mr. Kenyon in my favour, that he may come and see me, and stay more than one day.

Ever, my dear young friend,

Most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS.

Three Mile Cross, July —, 1836.

I think, after all, that you will come round to us in the matter of Miss Barrett. To say nothing of the sweetness and feeling of some of her former poems (the

'Stanzas to a Poet's Child,' for instance, and those called 'The Sea Mew,' in Miss Courtenay's Album), as well as their wonderful clearness and transparency of diction, there is a force, a vigour, and a tension, about the preface to the 'Prometheus,' which seems to be unmatched in modern prose. Depend upon it that, putting the learning out of the question, she is a most remarkable young woman. I have her 'Essay on Mind' (written before she was seventeen, and published two years after), which, and the notes to it, contain allusions to books, as if known by everybody, which Henry Cary declared to me no young man of his day at Oxford had ever looked into. Then she is such a sweet creature! You must make her acquaintance next winter. Mary and she will delight in each other; and it is the way to please one who loves to please us all—Mr. Kenyon.

I have been reading Charles and Alfred Tennyson's Poems. Have you read them? If not, do. You will like them, to use Mr. Chorley's phrase, "in spite of themselves." Also, I have just had a present of a most exquisite poem, which old Mr. Cary (the translator of Dante and Pindar) thinks more highly of than any poem of the present day—'Sylvia; or, the May Queen,' published in '27 by George Darley. Did you ever hear of it? I never did until the other day. Mrs. Cary has given it to me. It is exquisite—something between the 'Faithful Shepherdess' and the 'Midsummer Night's Dream.' Would you like to see it? The author is the son of a rich alderman of Dublin, who disinherited him because he would write poetry; and now he supports himself by writing in the magazines.

If 'Conti the Discontented' comes in your way, read it. The author is a most admirable young man, a friend of Mrs. Hemans, and about to publish her corre-

spondence and literary life. I had a tremendous job in finding her letters to me—such is the state of my papers.

Yours most sincerely,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Gloucester Place.*

Three Mile Cross, August 16, 1836.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Did Henry Chorley call himself? He told me that his heart had failed him. The nosegay was a very shabby one—I was myself in all the grief of parting from this same Henry Chorley, one of the most affable companions I have ever known, and I was besides *befraddled* by the eternal visitors, morning and evening visitors, who make this cottage during the summer and autumn months a sort of tea-garden, or rural Beulah Spa—then, John, the lad who manages my geraniums, was, on his part, in the joyful agony of preparing for the Reading Horticultural Show. For my own part, my vanity goes rather to the beauty of the flowers in a mass, or in that great nosegay my garden, than to the mere points of growth, and bloom, and sorts, by which the judges at flower-shows decide their merit. Nevertheless, as John loves to get prizes, and I have no objection, why we take the thing in very good part; only it certainly (joined with my grief at losing a pet visitor) spoilt your posy; at least made that shabby which ought to have been splendid.

You should take my venturing to criticise your verses as a proof of the perfect truth of my praise. I do not think there can be a better test of the sincerity of applause than the venturing to blame. It is also the fault, the one single fault, found by persons more

accustomed to judge of poetry than myself; by Mr. Dilke, for instance (the proprietor of the 'Athenæum'), and Mr. Chorley (one of its principal writers). Charles Kemble once said to me, with regard to the drama: "Think of the stupidest person of your acquaintance, and, when you have made your play so clear that you are sure that he would comprehend it, then you may venture to hope that it will be understood by your audience." And really I think the rule would hold good with regard to poetry in general, as well as tragedies. My Dash sends his respects to your doves; faithful and gentle they are both.

Ever, my dear friend,

Most affectionately yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Cheltenham.*

Three Mile Cross, Sept. 20, 1836.

MY OWN DEAR EMILY,

I am rejoiced that Mr. Smith is so pleased with the *Lupinus Crookshankii* (for that is its name). I think it one of our most beautiful flowers. I am going to send great parcels of dahlia roots and flower seeds and ivy to America, in March, to my late visitors, the Sedgwicks. Did I not tell you the brother and nephew of Miss Sedgwick (brother-in-law and nephew of the President, General Jackson) were with us for a long time. They are gone now, to the great benefit of my book, but to my own personal sorrow. Theodore was a most charming person, and to be parted three thousand miles from a dear friend is no small grief; it seems like a separation for three thousand years.

I am expecting Henry Chorley; he is a first-rate young man. He was, you know, the friend of poor Mrs. Hemans,

and his book about her (do try and get it at the library, 'Memorials of Mrs. Hemans,' in two volumes) is more to my taste than any biography that I have lately read, except Southey's 'Lives,' and the exquisite memoir of Crabbe, by his son. Do read it. Her love for me touched me deeply. It seemed as if truly, as I had always loved and honoured her, I had never prized and valued her enough. One feels so at the death-bed of a dear friend; and this book gave me such feelings.

Yes, I have a notion that Cheltenham is "a fine vulgar place;" but your friends are never of that stamp. I love Ireland; it is odd, but I do; and I always feel as if, some time or other, I was destined to see that fine country. Will this vision ever come to pass? The Duke of Devonshire is so good as to wish me to go to Chatsworth some time or other; and I have a scheme (Heaven knows when it will happen) to go through England, beginning in Hertfordshire, at the Hoo (Lord Dacre's), visiting all the way by Derbyshire, and the Lakes to Northumberland; then *viâ* Abbotsford to Edinburgh; then to the Scottish lakes; then to the north of Ireland; then to you, and Killarney, and—and—and—(don't be shocked), to Derrynane, and so home again. This would make a nice book: but how I could stand the fatigue; and whether my father would go or would stay; and whether I could leave him: these are the puzzling questions. Else everybody says that it would do me good, and Martha would like it, and the book would more than pay the charge—but my father! and Dash! Oh, it will never be! It is a pretty dream nevertheless.

Don't, dear, write to me about science; I never can understand what scientific people mean; and I used to pose poor dear Captain Kater, and to shock scientific ladies by asking what good it did; for really I never

could make out. So, as to the Bristol affair, it seems to me to be exquisite nonsense. I had rather see that old house at Swindon, with the children and the magpie (*we* have a magpie of our own who follows my father about like a dog), and have one hour's chat with you, than hear all the science that ever was talked, or see all the philosophers that ever trod the earth. And I am right, am I not? That old house must be exquisite. Did I tell you that George Dawson is about to build an Elizabethan house in *our* old grounds at Arborfield? That will be pretty, will it not?

Lady Sidmouth has given six acres of most valuable land for our hospital.

Yours most affectionately,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Gloucester Place.*

Three Mile Cross, Oct. 13, 1836.

DEAREST MISS BARRETT,

I have just read your delightful ballad. My earliest book was 'Percy's Reliques,' the delight of my childhood; and after them came Scott's 'Minstrelsy of the Borders,' the favourite of my youth; so that I am prepared to love ballads, although perhaps a little biassed in favour of great directness and simplicity, by the earnest plainness of my old pet. Do read Tennyson's 'Ladye of Shalot.' You will be charmed with its spirit and picturesqueness. Are you a great reader of the old English drama? I am—preferring it to every other sort of reading; of course admitting, and regretting, the grossness of the age; but that, from habit, one skips, without a thought, just as I should over so much Greek or Hebrew which I knew that I could not comprehend. Have you read Victor Hugo's Plays?

(he also is one of my naughty pets), and his 'Notre Dame?' I admit the bad taste of these, the excess; but the power and the pathos are to me indescribably great. And then he has broken through the conventional phrases, and made the French a new language. He has accomplished this partly by going back to the old fountains, Froissart, &c. Again, these old Chronicles are great books of mine.

Heaven bless you, my dear young friend!

Ever your faithful and affectionate

M. R. M.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Cheltenham.*

Three Mile Cross, Oct. —, 1836.

MY DEAR EMILY,

I have been longing for you all day to-day. I told you, I believe, that upon my young friend Mr. Lucas asking me to let him repaint my head (which he had painted six years ago and which, from his youth and want of practice, had been a failure), I had said laughingly, "No! No!" upon which he rejoined to me: "Well; if you won't sit to me yourself, perhaps you will let me paint your father?"—an offer which I had not been able to refuse. Nothing was ever so pretty; for he is now the fashionable portrait-painter. He painted the Princess Lieven, the Duchess of Cambridge, Lady Cowper, Lady Fordwich, Lady Clanricarde, Lady Mahon, all the Court beauties, Prince George of Cambridge, and a longer list of grandees than I can count. Well, liking his model and having completely his own way, and my father turning out unexpectedly the best sitter ever seen, he has produced such a picture, both for painting and likeness, as I am certain has not been produced in England since Sir Joshua's time. It is as like as the

looking-glass; beautiful old man that he is! and is the pleasantest likeness, the finest combination of power, and beauty, and sweetness, and spirit, that ever you saw. Such a piece of colour, too! He used all his carmine the first day, and was forced to go into Reading for a fresh supply. He says that my father's complexion is exactly like the sunny side of a peach, and so is his picture. Imagine how grateful I am! He has come all the way from London to paint this picture as a gift to me. These are amongst the compensations of literature! But yet, to have him for a week in the house, to go with him to the painting, which was done at our old home (Captain Gore's) a mile off, every day, then take him a drive till dinner, then either dine out or have company at home, (with our small establishment,) and I to do everything, and talk all day, and receive eight or ten sets of visitors, and answer ten or twelve notes every day; is so exhausting that it has really brought on a bilious attack. I must shut myself up, or the novel will never be finished.

My father is awfully lame. Coursing a fortnight ago, he brought on a recurrence of an old injury to the tendon under the left knee; but to-day he is better, and our very clever surgeon promises to cure him.

I liked Lady Sidmouth very much; she returned my visit the next day and stayed two hours. God bless you, my sweetest! Edwin Landseer has had an accident, so that I suppose poor Dash's portrait won't be done this year. You would be affected to see the interest which this picture of my father creates amongst the poor people round. It was quite affecting to see my dear father's manly modesty about that picture! He would hardly look at it until finished, and then said, over and over again, how much too handsome it was.

I have just had a magnificent present of geraniums from the Duke of Devonshire. Poor Malibran!

Believe me ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Oct. 17, 1836.

I prefer the man of action to the man of letters —the *mere* man of letters. But, certainly, the cultivation and faculty enhances and embellishes the sterner stuff. But I am made for mere country pleasures, rather than for those of literature. I was this afternoon for an hour on Heckfield Heath: a common dotted with cottages and a large piece of water backed by woody hills; the nearer portion of ground a forest of oak and birch, and hawthorn and holly, and fern, intersected by grassy glades; a road winding through; and behind us the tall trees of Strathfieldsaye Park. On an open space, just large enough for the purpose, a cricket match was going on—the older people sitting by on benches; the younger ones lying about under the trees; and a party of boys just seen glancing backward and forward in a sunny glade, where they were engaged in an equally merry and far more noisy game. Well, there we stood, Ben and I and Flush, watching and enjoying the enjoyment we witnessed. And I thought if I had no pecuniary anxiety, if my dear father were stronger and our dear friend well, I should be the happiest creature in the world, so strong was the influence of that happy scene.

Let me say, my sweetest, that the 'Romaunt of the Page' (which is a tragedy of the very deepest and highest order) always seems to me by far the finest thing that you have ever written; and I do entreat and

conjure you to write more ballads or tragedies—call them what you will—like that; that is to say, poems of human feelings and human actions. They will be finer, because truer, than any 'Psyche' can be.

I enclose a note to Mr. Haydon. Miss Arabel will like his vivacity and good spirits. Those high animal spirits are a gift from heaven, and frequently pass for genius; or rather make talent pass for genius—silver-gilded. Mr. Lucas is of a far higher and purer stamp. There is no gilding there; it is the true metal and without alloy, as far, I think, as can be said of any mortal.

Did I tell you his story? His father was a clerk in the War Office, an inferior clerk; and he, showing very strongly a genius for design when a boy, was apprenticed to Reynolds the mezzotint engraver. At Mr. Reynolds's he worked six days in every week from eight o'clock in the morning till eight o'clock at night, and he did work so honestly towards his master and himself that he could *now* earn from 1200*l.* to 2000*l.* a year as an engraver; but his aim was higher. His master being of so much eminence as to have such pictures as the 'Chapeau de Paille,' &c., to engrave, he rose at four in the morning, abstracted from his breakfast and dinner hours every moment not absolutely required for the support of life, and devoted every stolen minute to the study of oil-painting in those great pictures, and that with such success that the moment he was out of his time he was ready and able to earn his bread as a portrait painter—not only to earn his own bread, but to support (as he has done ever since) a widowed mother. One of his early patrons was Mr. Milton, Mrs. Trollope's brother, and at his request, he thinking that any one whose name was at all known

would be of service to the young artist, I sat to him for my portrait. Of course it was a failure. A plain, middle-aged woman could hardly be otherwise. We paid for it the too modest sum that he required, and never demanded it after it returned from the exhibition, where, in spite of its ugliness, it had a good place. He did not like the picture and did not send it back. We had, however, been charmed with *him;* had heard with delight of his rapidly increasing reputation; and had perhaps been of some little use to him in the early part of his career, by recommending him to different friends. This, however, was nothing; his own great talent, astonishing industry, and exemplary character were his best patrons. However, when we met in town, I said to him, "You used to like our poor cottage. Come and see us again; will you not?" and he answered, "I have been hoping that you would say this, because that head of you is upon my conscience, and I want to paint it over again." I replied, of course, "No; I asked you to come and see us for recreation, not for work. I shan't sit to you, I assure you." "Well," said he, "if you won't let me paint you, you'll let me paint your father?" And I could not resist; and he did come; and the portrait of my father is one of the very finest ever painted, and only less precious to me than the original. Think of the difference of his prices now and then; think of his coming to my father as he would to Prince Albert, and you will feel the full value of his unostentatious and generous piece of kindness.

I love John Lucas. He is less talked of than many who have not half his real reputation; but next to Sir Thomas Lawrence, no man has painted half so many of the highest nobility. The Duke of Wellington (an excellent judge) will sit to nobody else. The Duchesse

de Dino, Princess Lieven, and all the great foreigners preferred him to any portrait painter at home or abroad. I must enclose you a letter about him, from a dear friend, received to-day, and a note to him for Miss Arabel. He has now more pictures bespoken than he can paint for two years. Oh! if I had but a head of you by him! What a head of you he would make! I should like Mr. Barrett to see his portraits, and to know him. He is modest almost to shyness; but it is such a mind, so well worth a little trouble to get at. I love John Lucas. His wife I have never seen.

The tamarind water has been my father's best friend; it has given great relief. Love to all.

Yours most faithfully,

M. R. MITFORD.

CHAPTER V.

Letters for 1837.

To Dr. Mitford, 8 *King Street, Cheapside.*

Three Mile Cross, Feb. 1, 1837.

This afternoon, being so fine, I went to see Mrs. Gore, and found Lady Oranmore in a great fidget because she had not been able to get anybody to show her the way to me; poor Miss Swift being in bed, I suppose with influenza. Lord Arran has made a very proper will; he has left the Irish estates to Philip Gore, charged, however, with so many legacies and annuities as will make him for the present a poor earl; but then the annuities, &c., are proper: 600*l.* a year to his mother, the same to Colonel Charles Gore, the brother of our friends, as to them, and so on. We had a very pleasant chat indeed, Lady Oranmore being a very pleasant woman. I had to-day two most affectionate notes; one from Mrs. Walter, communicating the sad news of poor Mr. Bowles's death after a very short illness.

Your telling me that you had been to the play did my heart good, it was such a proof of your being well.

Ever yours,

M. R. Mitford.

To Miss Barrett, *Gloucester Place.*

Three Mile Cross, Feb. 22, 1837.

My dear Friend,

My father is, I thank Heaven, well. He is charmed with your story of the doves, being a complete bird fan-

cier. He told me a story, when talking of your doves, of having, when a boy of eight years old at school at Hexham, been made free of a strolling company, in consequence of lending them a tame bullfinch to act in 'The Padlock,' the first play he ever saw. It would be well for me if I had never seen any; and you are wise for keeping out of the atmosphere. Before I forget it, the work you see advertised is a little volume of 'Country Stories.' The novel will come out in the autumn—late in the autumn, I suppose—and I must complete a third work in the winter to make up for this year's loss of income in 'Otto:' so that I have no chance of seeing you, or indeed any other prospect in this life than that of incessant labour, anxiety, and disappointment. God grant me strength to bear it so long as my father lives!

To be sure Amorah *is* the 'Faithful Shepherdess.' If you look further into the plays, you will find that the undramatic character of that charming poem results from its pastoral and poetical qualities. Generally, Fletcher (for Beaumont had little to say in the matter) is highly dramatic, although his plots are wild and improbable and impossible, and deal in the most provoking incongruities. He is a great poet, and certainly next to Shakespeare as a dramatist, whether in tragedy or comedy.

Adieu, my dear Miss Barrett, and believe me,

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

Henry Chorley wishes me to go to town to sit for the 'Portrait Annual;' Miss Edgeworth, Mrs. Hemans, Lady Blessington, and myself being the ladies chosen for this first volume.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *London.*

Three Mile Cross, April 4, 1837.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I have only one moment, in which to proffer a petition to you. I have a little trumpery volume called 'Country Stories,' about to be published by Saunders & Otley. Will you permit me to give these tales some little value in my own eyes by inscribing them (of course in a few true and simple words) to you, my very old and most kind friend? I would not dedicate a play to you, for fear of causing you injury in your profession; but I do not think that this slight testimony of a very sincere affection could do you harm in that way, for even those who do not allow novels in their house sanction my little books.

Love to both the Maries.

Ever affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

How sad was poor Mr. Bowles's death!

To MISS BARRETT, *Gloucester Place.*

Three Mile Cross, May 4, 1837.

A thousand thanks, my dear friend, for your kind inquiries after Dash. He is quite well again, better and younger than he has been for months, or even years. Yesterday he ran at least twenty miles, having accompanied my father and myself in a flowering expedition to Penge Wood for the delicate wood-sorrel and other wood flowers, and to the Kennett Meadows for the white and speckled fritillary and other meadow blossoms. By-the-way, is it not an extraordinary thing that the blackthorn (sloe blossom) is just coming into

bloom in the hedges and the fritillary is in bloom in the meadows; the one being a blossom (as you well know) of March, early March; the other seldom out until the middle of May, along with its cousins the tulips? Well, we went on this expedition in a pony phaeton, leaving it at the wood and the meadows, and walking about there and gathering flowers, so that of some ten miles we contrived to make a four hours' ride, and Dash ran away four several times, beguiled by hares and so forth, and had a *démêlé*, which I should like you to have seen and heard, with a huge hedgehog, whose passive resistance was too much for my poor pet, but which we brought home in a basket, and put into the kitchen garden, where there is a hedge and water, and from which if he should choose to run away he can. I think he won't, for he was very sociable in coming home, and as we put milk in his way, and shall continue to do so, I expect him to remain in that state of semi-tameness, which, in the country, is what I like best to see in birds or wild animals, protected but not confined. My love to your doves. How I wish the eggs might be good! It would be such a delight to you to help the parent birds to bring up their young. I told the story of the bird's nest-making to my young artist Edmund Havell, and he said, "What a picture!" If he painted faces as well as he paints animals, I am sure that he would try.

So far as I can find, the people who call themselves scientific never chance upon useful inventions, and the objects that they pursue are as devoid of use as they are of beauty. Moreover, they are themselves, for the most part, so scornful and conceited, that we are at perfect liberty to "scorn the scorner." Only think, for instance, of botanists, who know no more of the cultivation of a plant than the desk I am writing on,

despising florists and horticulturists, who bring the lovely flowers and the goodly thing, fruit, to such perfection! And they can't even agree about their own jargon! We had the other day a pitched battle in my garden between a set of Linnæans and a set of Jussieuans, Oh! if you had heard the clatter! I was fain to bring forth my own list of new annuals (I have sixty, most of which have never blown in England), and had the glory of out-long-wording both parties, to the shame of floriculture, who ought to speak plain. I wish you had been present; it was a curious scene. The best stroke at science which I have met with for a long time is in the last 'Pickwick.' I hope you love humour; I, for my part, delight in it, and hold Mr. Dickens to be the next great benefactor of the age to Sir Walter Scott. There is about him, too, an anti-cant and anti-humbug spirit which is worth anything.

My book is called 'Country Stories.' It is passing slowly through the press, and will not, I suppose, be advertised till nearly ready. I speak the real truth in saying that I do not like it. If ever I did like any of my prose works it was 'Belford Regis,' and this is more in the way of 'Our Village.' Mr. Browning seems studiously to have thrown poetry aside in his tragedy, as Shelley did; though I doubt if his subject can be so dramatic as the horribly powerful story of the 'Cenci.'

And now, my ever-dear love, Heaven bless you! We are going flowering again, to a copse full of primroses and ground ivy, and wood anemones. I wish you were with us!

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To the Rev. William Harness, *Heathcote Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Sunday,
May 15, 1837.

My dear Friend,

I have taken your advice and have written at once to Lord Melbourne. I have not the honour of knowing him, but my letter is brief and plain, saying that my poor earnings are the support of my family; that I had this year, from the state of the drama, been compelled to withdraw a tragedy,* for which I had hoped to have been paid in ready money; that this blow was followed by a failure of health and spirits, which had nearly deprived me of the power of literary exertion; and that the pension granted to Lady Morgan had caused a friend of mine to press upon me the present application. Of course my letter is better put together, but *that* is the material. I added that I had no interest, that my life had been one of struggle and of labour, almost as much withdrawn from the literary as the fashionable world; and that I was emboldened to take a step which seemed so presumptuous, by the sight of my father's white hairs, and the certainty that such another winter as the last would take from me all power of literary exertion, and send those white hairs in sorrow to the grave.

Now, this is strictly true. Have I done right? I have also written to the Duke of Devonshire, telling him what I have done, and saying, that I dare not ask him to intercede for me—but if he will——. Also I have written to Miss Fox, who is very kind to me, and I have enclosed my letter to her in one to Lady Dacre; and I shall enclose *this* in one to Mr. Sergeant Talfourd, who wrote to me very kindly the other day, to tell me of Mr. Forrest's leaving Drury Lane, he supposed because he did not draw the expenses of the house.

* 'Otto.'

Is all this right? It may not succeed, but it can do no harm. If it do succeed, I shall owe all to you, who have spirited me up to the exertion. No woman's constitution can stand the wear and tear of all this anxiety. It killed poor Mrs. Hemans, and will, if not averted, kill me.

Ever faithfully and gratefully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *London.*

Three Mile Cross, May 20, 1837.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have just received the following letter from Miss Fox. How adorably kind Lady Dacre is!

"MY DEAR MADAM,

"Lady Dacre brought me your letter on Monday; and certainly, however much it may overstate the probability of my being of any use in this business, it cannot express more strongly than I feel, a wish to be so. I sent your letter to my brother immediately; and this is the copy of his answer:

"'Lady Holland' (so I at last find it runs) 'has long felt a great interest about Miss Mitford; and, when we know how the pension question stands, and what are Melbourne's views about it, we may judge if any and what use may be made of the letter you have sent me. Miss Mitford, both as a woman and as an author, is certainly a very deserving person, and a fit object for such favours. I heartily hope she may succeed, and I will do my best to support her wishes.'"

Then follow most kind expressions from Miss Fox, and so forth. Now, I thought it right to send you this letter, the only one that I have received to-day, because

it seems to me that, turn out how it may, Lord Holland has given a great sanction to our application. You cannot think how much it has comforted me, because, in spite of my entire reliance on your judgment, I could not help having certain misgivings, and fearing that you had been misled by the feelings of an old friendship to overrate my claims,* and that I might be accused of presumption and impertinence in making the application, although certainly the terms in which my letters were couched would not be liable to that objection.

Not hearing either from Lord Melbourne or the Duke seems to me to prove, at least, that the one will not refuse his kind word, and that the other does not consider it a thing to be rejected without a little consideration. I am very glad Lady Holland favours our suit; because, having both Miss Fox and her ladyship, we shall have Lord H. strongly with us.

How I torment you, but I could not help sending you this letter.

Ever yours,
M. R. M.

* "Claims" is a wrong word, for I make no such pretension. I mean rather "literary standing," as the Americans would say.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross,
Sunday night, May 31, 1837.

I cannot suffer one four-and-twenty hours to pass, my own dearest Emily, without telling you, what I am sure will give you so much pleasure, that I have had to-day an announcement from Lord Melbourne of a pension of 100*l.* a year. The sum is small, but that cannot be considered as derogatory, which was the amount given by Sir Robert Peel to Mrs. Hemans and Mrs. Somer-

ville; and it is a great comfort to have something to look forward to as a certainty, however small, in sickness or old age, unlikely as it is that I should ever live to be old. But the real gratification of this transaction has been the kindness, the warmth of heart, the cordiality, and the delicacy of every human being connected with the circumstances. It originated with dear William Harness, and that most kind and zealous friend, Lady Dacre; and the manner in which it was taken up by the Duke of Devonshire, Lord and Lady Holland, Lord and Lady Radnor, Lord Palmerston, and many others—some of whom I have never even seen, whose talents and character, as well as their rank and station, render their notice and approbation a distinction as well as an advantage—has been such as to make this one of the most pleasurable events of my life. Even your partiality would be astonished at the mass of letters which I have received, their genuine sympathy and their profound respect.

Is not this very honourable to the kind feelings of our aristocracy? I always knew that I had, as a writer, a strong hold in that quarter; that they turned with disgust from the trash called fashionable novels to the common life of Miss Austen, the Irish Tales of Miss Edgeworth, and my humble Village Stories; but I did not suspect the strong personal interest which these stories had excited, and I am intensely grateful for it.

Dash has been at the point of death, but is quite well again. You know that the dog, Dash, and the maid, Martha, are my home comforts, next to my dear father. Heaven bless you!

Ever yours,

M. R. Mitford.

To the Rev. William Harness, *Heathcote Street.*

Three Mile Cross, May 31, 1837.

My dear Friend,

I have this morning the most positive assurances from Mr. Heathcote (who has been one powerful and efficient ally in this matter) that he consented to accept the sum only as an *instalment*, and that he has the most decided promise that as soon as ministers have the power, the pension shall be enlarged. The Act of Parliament is this: Every pension that falls in is reduced by one-half, and the other half granted to some fresh applicant. A pension of 200*l.* fell in yesterday week, and Mr. Heathcote and Lord Palmerston accepted the 100*l.* under condition that it should be augmented within the twelvemonth. I find, too, from a neighbour that heard it in town, but most discreetly kept the secret, that another most powerful person (he will not tell me the name, but some one of whom neither you nor I have heard in the business) has declared that he will not be satisfied unless it be 300*l.* I am *most sincerely and unfeignedly thankful* for what has been done, and shall be quite content if here it rests, although if there be that feeling among the persons named it would, of course, be foolish not to take advantage of it, should opportunity offer. I am most thankful, and I love to own so much to you, my earliest and truest friend.

God bless you!

Ever most gratefully yours,

M. R. Mitford.

To Miss Barrett, *Gloucester Place.*

Three Mile Cross, June 28, 1837.

My sweet Love,

I want you to write me a poem in illustration of a very charming group of Hindoo girls floating their

lamps upon the Ganges—launching them I should say. You know that pretty superstition. I want a poem in stanzas. It must be long enough for two large pages, and may be as much longer as you choose. It is for 'Finden's Tableaux,' of which I have undertaken the editorship; and I must entreat it within a fortnight or three weeks if possible, because I am limited to time, and have only till the end of next month to send up the whole copy cut and dry. I do entreat you, my sweet young friend, not to refuse me this favour. I could not think of going to press without your assistance, and have chosen for you the very prettiest subject and, I think, the prettiest plate of the whole twelve. I am quite sure that, if you favour me with a poem, it will be the gem of the collection.

Now to less pretty considerations. My proprietor, Mr. Tilt, has put into my hands 30*l.*; that is to say, 5*l.* each for my six poets (I am to do all the prose and dramatic scenes myself); and with this 5*l.*, which is, I believe, the usual price, I shall have the honour of sending a copy of the work, which will be all the prettier and more valuable for your assistance. I will not contemplate a refusal, and have only to request that I may receive one line to tell me that you consent, as speedily as may be. If you like I will send you the engraving, or rather an unfinished proof of it in my possession.

Heaven bless you!

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

If you can give me time and thought enough to write one of those ballad-stories, it would give an inexpressible grace and value to my volume. Depend upon it that the time will come when those verses of yours will have a money value.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, June 30, 1837.

So you never heard of the 'Pickwick Papers!' Well! They publish a number once a month and print 25,000. The bookseller has made about 10,000*l.* by the speculation. It is fun—London life—but without anything unpleasant: a lady might read it all *aloud;* and it is so graphic, so individual, and so true, that you could curtsey to all the people as you met them in the streets. I did not think there had been a place where English was spoken to which 'Boz' had not penetrated. All the boys and girls talk his fun—the boys in the streets; and yet they who are of the highest taste like it the most. Sir Benjamin Brodie takes it to read in his carriage between patient and patient; and Lord Denman studies 'Pickwick' on the bench whilst the jury are deliberating. Do take some means to borrow the 'Pickwick Papers.' It seems like not having heard of Hogarth, whom he resembles greatly, except that he takes a far more cheerful view, a Shakesperian view, of humanity. It is rather fragmentary, except the trial (No. 11 or 12), which is as complete and perfect as any bit of comic writing in the English language. You must read the 'Pickwick Papers.'

My geraniums are splendid this year—magnificent. We have the whole world to see them. I wish you were amongst them at this moment; but we are parching with drought. Have you read Harriet Martineau's 'America?' It is a splendid book—ardent, eloquent, earnest, sincere, full of pictures, full of heart. I do not agree in her theories, but that is another matter. She is a great honour to her sex and country. Another book, which is much the fashion, is Mr. Sergeant Tal-

fourd's 'Life of Charles Lamb.' It consists almost wholly of his letters, which are entertaining, although not elegant enough to give me much pleasure. It is very odd that I should not mind the perfectly low-life of the 'Pickwick Papers,' because the closest copies of things that are, and yet dislike the want of elegance in Charles Lamb's letters, which are merely his own fancies; but I think you will understand the feeling.

If I had time and room I could tell you fifty pretty stories of our young Queen.

Ever most affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Torquay.*

Three Mile Cross, July —, 1837.

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

I am in great anxiety again. My dearest father has had in the past week two several attacks of English cholera. They have reduced him exceedingly, more than you can fancy, and I am now sitting on the ground outside his door, with my paper on my knee, watching to hear whether he sleeps. Oh! my dearest love, at how high a price do we buy the joy of one great undivided affection, such as binds us heart to heart! For the last two years I have not had a week without anxiety and alarm, so that fear seems now to be a part of my very self; and I love him so much the more tenderly for this clinging fear, and for his entire reliance upon me! You, with so many to love, and so many to love you, can hardly imagine what it is to be so totally the whole world to each other as we are. And oh! when sickness comes, when one attack of a different kind follows another, so that the insecurity of our treasure is pressed upon our attention every hour—oh!

how tremblingly, throbbingly, sensible do we become to the consciousness of that insecurity! I hardly now dare leave him for half an hour. I have not left him for a drive, or to drink tea with a friend, for years. But I must not worry you with my depression. Heaven bless you!

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To the Rev. William Harness, *Heathcote Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Oct. 1, 1837.

My dear Friend,

I have been very unwell during the greater part of this summer, for two months never past the outer door, and now that I am pretty well again we are in great trouble. Our landlady, who is a most singular compound of miser and shrew, refuses to put this poor cottage, where we have lived for seventeen years without having one shilling laid out by the owner, into the decent repair without which a great part of it will fall upon our heads, so that we are compelled to move.

Luckily, a comfortable roomy farmhouse, about half a mile off, is vacant, the farmer who rents the land living at another farm; and we may have this at thirty pounds a year, he, the farmer, paying the rates, taxes, &c., and we having a meadow of three acres into the bargain. But the garden is a potato-ground, and I am heart-broken at leaving my flowers, and frightened to death at the expense of moving and making a garden; for we having the materials, my father insists upon transporting them to our new abode; and certainly it will be less expensive to make the garden there than to do all that must be done to this poor cabin, which I love dearly in spite of all its deficiencies and faults. Still

it will be a great expense, and I shall never like the new house as I do the old.

I must tell you a pretty thing that has happened close by. The journeyman of our neighbour the shoemaker has caught my love of flowers, and having borrowed of his brother the blacksmith a little bit of waste ground by the forge, behind some poplars which draw all the nourishment from the earth, so that they could not raise cabbages there, planted it with seedling dahlias (about two hundred), which he used to water night and morning all the summer with a *can*, which he carried backward and forward from the pond at the top of the street. Well, he has got the best seedling of the year, the very best. It happened to be in bloom in time for the last Reading show; gained, of course, the cottagers' prize, and he will get something between 5*l*. and 10*l*. for the root, besides the honour. I never, I think, saw such a happy face in my life as his at the flower show. He never stirred from his flower. All the gardeners far and near (for it was a grand dahlia show open to all England, and we had twelve prizes for strangers, and they came from beyond London) clustered about him; and John Brown and his dahlia were the lions of the day. I think I enjoyed it as much as he did; his love of flowers was so genuine, and his success so entirely deserved.

A dear friend of mine, who is appointed superintendent of the Queen's dressers, gives a very interesting account of her. She says she is a girl of great power, sedate and serious far beyond her years, and fully equal to all that she will be required to do. Of the Queen of the Belgians she speaks with enthusiasm. She says that in any rank of life she would be one of the kindest, gayest, most obliging, and easily-pleased per-

sons that ever lived, one for whom it would be a privilege and a happiness to do anything. She also speaks most favourably of her husband. He told the housekeeper at Windsor that he never went to Claremont without a recurrence of the same feelings as when he first returned there after his irreparable loss.

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Gloucester Place.*

Three Mile Cross, Dec. 2, 1837.

MY DEAR LOVE,

My book has been hindered by my ill health, by my many visitors, and lately by workmen. You can hardly imagine the demands upon my time: my father, eight or ten letters to read and answer in a day, almost as many notes, often more sets of visitors, the care of my small household, the necessity of seeing everything done, and generally of doing that which my dear father (who, if he take a key in hand, leaves it in the door or in the drawer) is sure to leave undone.

All this, and care, and fear, and anxiety beyond measure; responsibility without power; make it wonderful that I should in a twelvemonth (being, besides, slow and barren without conception) have written 'Otto,' 'Country Stories,' the 'Tableaux,' and a story (longer than all the 'Tableaux') *lost* in the road to Edinburgh, or at Edinburgh—at all events lost; a loss, first and last, of above seventy pounds. All this makes it more wonderful that I should have done so much, than that I should have not done more. Even if I have not the nausea, the other fearful suffering is sure to come on every morning, sometimes at four or five o'clock, and last till noon. Think how that incapacitates! and think what

it is to feel, that more ought to be done, and yet that I cannot do it! To feel incapacity as a sin! Latterly, the din and the bustle of workmen have wholly hindered all composition. I have had to move, or to see moved, all our goods (as the country people say) from one room to another, and back again, and again away; and this is likely to last for some weeks. We shall gain great comfort, and at comparatively small expense, though still far more than we can afford. But that expense was inevitable, for the house was falling in, and the cost will be less than that of moving would have been; but still far, far more than we can afford or ought to spend; and this frets and worries me past expression. I believe there is not a labourer's wife in the parish who thinks so much of spending a shilling as I do.

By the accidental delay of a letter sent to be franked by the brother of my correspondent, the offer of a large roomy house in Wales, completely furnished, with two gardens and a large rich meadow, at a rent merely nominal, did not arrive till all was settled about this place. To this offer was added that of cows, ponies, a rick of old hay, key of cellar and storeroom, and every thoughtful attention that you can devise, and the assurance (I believe a most sincere one) that the acceptance of this proposal would make my kind friend a happy one; that it would turn a dissatisfied and melancholy life into one of cheerfulness and comfort. It would have been difficult to have resisted this offer, coming from a person in affluence and without children, to whom I felt that our society would have been an equivalent, and for whom I have myself the affection which renders obligations light; but my father—it would have been a great risk for him. Seventy-seven is too old for transplanting. I could not have moved him from his old

friends and amusements without feeling that it was risking his happiness, and if anything had happened to him, and I had even fancied that the change of place had had to do with it, I should have been miserable. As to myself, I should most certainly have gone; the beautiful country, the fine climate, the getting rid of a horde of idle acquaintances, and the cheapness, above all, would certainly have carried me away. As it is, I have only the gratification (a very true one) produced by the having been the object of so much kindness. She, too, is one of my gains by literature; her husband and herself came to Reading this spring to make my acquaintance, returned again for some weeks, after a short visit to London, and now it is certainly a friendship for life.

By-the-way, we have just had Mr. Lucas here, who painted that fine portrait of my father. He has been painting the Queen Dowager and her sister, and has given so much satisfaction that they have ordered two copies of each picture. The portrait of Queen Adelaide is, he says, very interesting, in her weeds. He speaks highly of her, and says that her portraits have never done her justice—that her forehead is fine—and that there is in her eyes an intensity of expression which has never been caught by any one. Her handwriting (which he showed me) is admirable—bold, and firm, and free.

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

CHAPTER VI.

Letters for 1838.

To Miss Barrett, *Gloucester Place.*

Three Mile Cross, Feb. 1, 1838.

My dear Love,

I have got to think your obscurity of style, my love, merely the far-reaching and far-seeing of a spirit more elevated than ours, and look at the passages till I see light breaking through, as we see the sun shining upon some bright point (Oxford, for instance) in some noble landscape. I have just been reading Racine's 'Letters,' and Boileau's. How much one should like both, if it were not for their slavish servile devotion to the king (and I think it was real), and to that odious woman Madame de Maintenon. Also Racine was a bigot, but sincere. My liking for Madame de Sevigné, is, I suppose, owing to my very ignoble love of gossip, which, if it be but honest and natural, I always like, whether on paper or *de vive voix.* And French, being the very language of chit-chat and prittle-prattle, is one reason why I like so much the *mémoires* and letters of that gossiping nation. Certainly Molière is their greatest man. Do you know Foote's farces? They have more of Molière than any other English writer, to say nothing of a neatness

of dialogue the most perfect imaginable—as perfect as the dialogue part of the 'Critic,' which I take to be the most finished bit of Sheridan. I think you will like Mr. Townsend's smaller pieces. Lady Dacre you will love. Heaven bless you! Love to all.

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *Heathcote Street.*

Three Mile Cross,
Monday evening, Feb. 5, 1838.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am going to ask you a very great favour, which, as it depends entirely upon yourself, and as there are many reasons for granting it, and none against it, I cannot doubt your complying with. It is that you will sell out our money, the funds being now so high, let me have 600*l.*, and buy an annuity on my life and my father's with the rest. This will bring us in more in income than we now have; will relieve my mind from an insupportable weight; and will make me from a most anxious and miserable, a comfortable woman. My father has nothing to do with the matter. If I had written the novel as agreed upon, it would not have been wanted; but ever since the affair of 'Otto' I have been a martyr to a most painful complaint, which, not confining me (except occasionally, in very violent attacks), has yet kept me in a state of constant suffering during many hours, either of the night or day.

This winter, luckily, it came on with a violence so dangerous, that my father was forced to send, at midnight, for a very clever Reading surgeon, and he has put me in such a train, that, though I can hardly expect a cure, the incapacitating pain is much abated, and even

the exceeding inconvenience lessened. So that the 200*l.* a year, which will be in future all that we shall need to go on as we are going on, can be gained without inconvenience, if it please God to continue to me health and faculty. Even so ill as I have been this last year, I have gained that and more; but before the publication of 'Country Stories,' in short, as soon as, in consequence of 'Otto,' I had failed in my agreement with Saunders & Otley, they wrote to me to say that the state of literature was so much changed that they could only give 400*l.* down for a novel, adding 150*l.* if a certain number were sold, and the same sum after another stipulated sale. Now I know, and so, I take for granted, do you, that these sort of payments never are made; so that it was a diminution of nearly one-half. Colburn would possibly give more (some years ago he offered 1000*l.*); but still he might not. And under every circumstance the plan which I have proposed is the best.

I have no one to leave the money to—no one, I mean, who has upon me any claim of nature or adoption; my father's life is much the better of the two; the getting quit of these debts (which to my certain knowledge it will completely do) is a question of more than life—of health, happiness, comfort, independence, respectability—of all that makes life not merely valuable but endurable; so it is to my dear father, who did not propose this scheme, but who is now certainly anxious (although not so anxious as I am) that it should be accomplished. If it be not, I shall sell my plants, my only pleasure; shall write under a miserable anxiety which will make all I write worthless; and shall very likely (a free and easy mind being the first thing prescribed for my complaint, which any

worry brings on immediately) get quite as ill as I was before. This is the very truth.

God bless you, my dear friend! Write and say "Yes."

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

[The request made in the foregoing letter was conceded, the debts paid, and the residue placed out on mortgage.]

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *Heathcote Street.*

Three Mile Cross, March 6, 1838.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

If we go on with the 'Annual' I shall certainly hope for a dramatic scene from you. People are quite crazy about your play. I threaten to have it chained to the wall, as used to be the fate of bigger books, for they put it into pockets and reticules, and keep one in a constant fume for fear of losing the treasure. Mr. Joy, your brother-trustee, has fallen in love with the extracts in the 'Quarterly,' and I have been obliged to write his good old aunt a full and particular account of you and your belongings. I know nothing more delightful than these sort of vindications by the public of one's own peculiar feelings of appreciation.

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Bath.*

Three Mile Cross, July 4, 1838.

Did I tell you that we have a very pretty little brown spaniel? He was Ben's. A year ago a savage boy broke his poor little leg. We nursed him and cured him, and he stayed about the place, and now he has crept in by degrees, and is a most loving and amusing little creature, with the most beautiful short

shiny curly coat that can be. My father is very fond of him indeed. I have been offered dogs of all sorts, but we could not be better off than with poor little Flush (that is his name, Flush) unless we could get such another as my lamented and noble Dash. It is one of Flush's recommendations that he was very, very fond of dear, dear Dash, and that our noble and gracious pet liked him. Indeed, I don't believe that my father would now change Flush for any dog.

My present passion is for indigenous orchises. I had a good collection last year, but they were trampled under foot during the winter, when I was too ill to attend to them. I have now one or two specimens only of the bee orchis, and several of the butterfly, which is the most exquisitely fragrant of the night-scented plants. If I could get about amongst the Oxfordshire woods I could enlarge my collection, but, as it is, I am obliged to trust to the kindness of friends, having only been able to make one excursion to get the butterfly orchises. Your convolvulus major is in great beauty, so are my geraniums, and a certain exquisite carmine pea; also a delicate white pea, freaked in blue and pink, a most unusual union of colour, quite like old china. You will be glad to hear that the bay tree is coming up strong from the roots at one part, better than if from several, and we shall be magnificent in dahlias, having one hundred and eight of the very finest known. Oh, if you could but come to see us! My father would delight in seeing you. The Merrys asked for you to-day most kindly. Make my affectionate regards to the dear Crowthers.

Ever, my very dear friend,

Yours most faithfully,

M. R. MITFORD.

To Miss Jephson, *Bath.*

Three Mile Cross, August 20, 1838.

I assure you, my dearest, that I, like yourself, have had applications *for money*, even since it has been generally known that for twenty years my dear parents have been mainly supported by my poor labours; supported, not in the parish-allowance sense of the word, but kept in comfort, and in every way genteelly and respectably, except as regards this poor cottage, where, to say a truth which I tell to few, I stay principally, because it is only the fewness and smallness of our closets here which could restrain my dear, dear father from the exercise of that too large and liberal hospitality, which, added to other causes, drove him through *three* good fortunes. Even since that has been known (a fact which I was forced to make public, from the hope of restraining such applications), I have been requested to lend hundreds, approaching the fourth figure, to become security for *thousands*, to ask for livings, for demyships or scholarships at college, for writerships and cadetships in India (all this for persons many of whom I had never heard of), to correct plays, to write them up, and *then* get them acted, to write a volume or half a volume for one, to give my name to volumes which I never saw for another, to subscribe and to get subscriptions without end.

I am perfectly sure that no week passes without some such application. If I answer, "I myself write for bread," the reply is, "I know this; but being yourself popular and well paid, of course your first pleasure is to assist obscure merit," and so forth. And in many instances, where the absolute want of money forces me to continue obdurate, pleading that I have myself nothing to give, and have long been compelled to make a general

rule not to torment my friends by begging for subscriptions, I have been assailed by letters of the coarsest abuse. I am perfectly certain that 200*l.* a year would not cover the amount of *claims* urged upon me in this manner, nor 500*l.* of petitions to get subscriptions or donations from my friends: sometimes by name, as Lady Sidmouth, Lady Dacre, the Duke of Devonshire, &c; sometimes—generally—fixing 50*l.* or 60*l.* as the sum depended upon from me, that is to say, to be raised amongst my friends by my importunity.

Some of these applicants I have never heard of, most of them I have never seen; some have introduced themselves by a visit *here*, arising (according to their assertion) from a real or pretended enthusiasm, and followed up, after the stay of a day or two, accompanied by all the attention that we could pay them, by such demands, repeated upon every occasion. One, in particular, took advantage of having dined with us here and in town, to introduce himself as a friend of ours to my father's old wine merchant, whom he favoured with a large order; and happening, in a morning call, to meet with another friend deeply engaged in the coal trade, would also have given *him* the advantage of his custom, had not the shrewdness of the last-mentioned person saved him from the infliction. Then, when they have gained all that you are able to give, they quarrel with you and abuse you, and do all that they can to injure you in the reviews and papers with which they may happen to be connected. And these are poets!!

Of one man, a poet in the annuals, who, because I only sent him a guinea to assist a sick mother, followed me with the grossest denunciations, I took the trouble to ascertain all that I could of the history. He had sent a letter, representing himself as starving and naked, to

my excellent old friend Mrs. Hofland, who, setting out instantly to his lodgings on a cold winter's night, found his story apparently true, an old lady lying in a ragged bed in a most comfortless room, and he sitting wretchedly clad writing at a table. She sent them that very night food, firing, clothes; got, using her own name, an advertisement the very next morning into the 'Times,' collected 50*l*., and introduced him to a merchant, who took him into his counting-house at 80*l*. a year. Six months afterwards, being in exactly the same condition, he had the effrontery to apply again to the same benevolent person, and, upon her asking why he had left his situation, replied, "How could a man of genius be fettered to a desk?" Well, these are the men; the women, are I think, very much worse.

I am so glad that you like the plan of my new book: 'The Miscellany,' it might be called. The letters *are* gossiping. My father is gone up to sell it. I hope that he may not be disappointed in the sum. He is at once generous and sanguine; and it having pleased God, somehow or other, to enable me hitherto to provide what was absolutely wanted, he now, I think, relies upon it, just as if it were money in the funds—his only fault, God bless him! But if he could tell how debt presses upon the mind—upon the heart as if it were a sin, and sometimes, I do believe, makes me ill, when otherwise I should be well—he would be more careful. But men do not change at eighty; and I do think that while he wants me, and for what he wants me, I shall be spared. Finden has not yet paid me.

I am not exceedingly worse, only there is more and more fatigue and severe pain.

Yours most affectionately,

M. R. Mitford.

To MISS BARRETT, *Torquay.*

Three Mile Cross, Sept. 20, 1838.

Ten thousand thanks, my dear young friend, for the clouted cream, that pastoral luxury, which is so welcome to me, because my father is so fond of it. I am not myself suffered to partake of the delicacy, but what my father enjoys is more than enjoyment to me, and it is mere selfishness that makes it so. I love to feed Flush even, and to see my tame pigeons feed at the window, and the saucy hen tap the glass, if the casement be shut. She likes to come in and to sit on the innermost ledge of the window-sill, and listen and turn her pretty top-knotted head to this side and that while I talk to her. This pleasure I owe to you, having taken to the homely pigeons as a rustic imitation of your doves, and they blend well with my flowery garden.

In spite of his physical debility, Mr. Thatcher is in no common degree *manly;* and when I say this, and add that he is also mild and gentle, I say more for him than can be said for most of the 'pen and ink' people, who are by very far the most effeminate class in existence. If it take nine tailors to make a man, according to my calculation it would take nine authors to make a tailor.

I hope favourably for Miss Landon's marriage. Dr. Buckland had seen (he told me) her husband, a little boyish-looking fair-haired Scotchman, but really thirty-six. He spoke well of him; and a story, which I will tell you, looks liberal and gentlemanly: Mr. Maclean was showing some rings of negro workmanship at a party, where he accidentally met Dr. Buckland, and offered him a large and heavy one. "Not that," said Dr. Buckland, unwilling to accept so valuable a

present; "give me one of the small and slight ones, for my wife or daughter." Upon which Mr. Maclean forced three rings upon him, the original and two of the slighter fabric. This looked well. The rings I saw, and they were beautiful. The things that go under Lady Stepney's *title** were all written over by Miss Landon, or the grammar and spelling would have disgraced a lady's maid. This is a want of self-respect which one cannot pardon; and, coupled with other facts of a similar nature, they explain my distaste towards her as a sister authoress.

Did I tell you that I have had accounts of Joanna Baillie, who was seventy-six on the 11th of this month? She is losing her memory, and conscious of her loss. Heaven bless you, my ever dearest! Let me hear soon, soon.

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

* In the Annual.

CHAPTER VII.

Letters for 1839 and 1840.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, March 1, 1839.

My dearest Emily,

Poor dear Lady Dacre has written me the most affecting letter I ever read. Mrs. Sullivan was all that is good, and Lady Dacre's love for her was like that of Madame de Sevigné for Madame de Grignan. Poor Mrs. Dupuy, too, is in equal distress for the loss of Mrs. Blagrave. Lady Sidmouth, Lady Morton tells me, is worse instead of better since her sojourn in town, where she has put herself under the care of Dr. Chambers and Sir Benjamin Brodie. I fear that my sweet Miss Barrett is no better at Torquay. The Milmans have lost their favourite child, a girl, whose little hand was always in her father's. Mrs. Milman's mother is also dead. In short, Death is busy around us. I am doubly thankful to have had my beloved father spared to me. If I could but give my whole life to him, reading to him, driving out with him, playing cribbage with him, never five minutes away from him, except when he is asleep (for this is what makes him happy), it would be the breath of life to me; for the complete and child-like dependence which he has upon my love to supply to him food and rest and amusement is the most

endearing of all ties. I love him a million times better than ever, and can quite understand that love of a mother for her first-born, which this so fond dependence produces in the one so looked to.

How entirely I sympathise in all the troubles of that tremendous storm. To me the fall of an oak always seems like death. Flush is his master's darling, and certainly the prettiest and merriest and most affectionate little creature that ever lived. We thought he would have died of grief during my father's illness; he would not eat, and passed his whole life at the chamber door.

My father's love to you. He is so well!

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Torquay.*

Three Mile Cross, May 28, 1839.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I should always doubt any preference of mine when opposed to yours, always, even if my ignorance of languages did not make my writing about foreign poetry a very great presumption. French I read just like English, and always shall, and I have a tendency towards the comedies and memoirs, that makes me open a French book with real gusto. And little as I know of Italian, I like the gem-like bits of Ariosto. But after all to be English, with our boundless vistas in verse and in prose, is a privilege and a glory; and *you* are born among those who make it such, be sure of that. I do not believe, my sweetest, that the very highest poetry does sell at once. Look at Wordsworth! The hour will arrive, and all the sooner if to poetry, un-

matched in truth and beauty and feeling, you condescend to add story and a happy ending, that being among the conditions of recurrence to every book with the mass even of cultivated readers—I do not mean the few.

I once remember puzzling an epicure by adding to an apple tart, in the making, the remains of a pot of preserved pine, syrup and all, a most unexpected luxury in our cottage; such would a bit of your writing be in a book of mine—flavour, sweetness, perfume, and unexpectedness. . . . Yes, for one year, from eight and a half to nine and a half—I lived—*we* lived, at Lyme Regis. Our abode was a fine old house in the middle of the chief street; a porch and great gables with spread-eagles distinguish it. It was built round a quadrangle, and the back looked into a garden, which descended by terraces to a small stream, a descent so abrupt that a grotto with its basin and spring formed a natural shelter under the hilly bank, planted with strawberries. Arbutus, passion-flowers, myrtles, and moss-roses abounded in that lovely garden and covered the front of the house; and the drawing-room chimney-piece was a copy of the monument to Shakespeare in Westminster Abbey. How I loved that house! There is an account of a visit to Lyme in Miss Austen's exquisite 'Persuasion.' Some of the scenery in the back of the Isle of Wight resembles Pinny, but it is inferior.

I shall tell dear Lady Dacre of your sympathy. Heaven bless you, my own sweet love!

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr.*

Three Mile Cross, May 30, 1839.

Have you heard that there has been a report—false of course—that Miss Clarke (Lady Morgan's niece) was to be married to Rogers the poet? He is seventy-seven at least. All London believed it for some time; but it is not so.

If you have any single anemone seed to spare, send me some enclosed to Mr. Sergeant Talfourd, M.P.

Ever most affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

We have an exquisite lithograph of Lucas's portrait of my father.

To DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.

About July, 1839.

Your graceful and gracious method of asking for contributions, my dear Mr. Jerrold, could not have been answered by a denial, even if the name of the editor, the striking individuality of the illustrations, and the general power and popularity of the work, had not been such as to insure my readiest compliance. Will you have the goodness to tell the proprietor, with my compliments, that I accept his terms of five guineas for an article not exceeding eight pages, and will endeavour to approach that length as closely as my usual blundering with regard to the respective quantities of MS. and letter-press will permit. But I shall not be able to send any contributions just yet. It has pleased Messrs. Finden at the eleventh hour to apply to me to edit a fourth volume of their splendid 'Tableaux,' and to desire that two-thirds at least of the book be written by myself, and until that be fairly out of hand, I cannot

turn to any other work. Even after that I have another short engagement, which ought to precede yours; but that may perhaps wait until I have furnished you with one article. Has Mr. Hammond really taken Drury Lane? And would he, do you think, like a ghost story, which upon a large stage would be effective, for an afterpiece? If so, I have one by me.

Ever faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *London.*

Three Mile Cross, August 2, 1839.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Of all the persons I have ever seen, Daniel Webster most completely answers my notion of a truly great man—good as well as great—with the gentleness and repose of power in his words and in his smile. It really does one good to think that such a man has arisen from among the tillers of the earth, to take his place as a legislator and ruler of nations. Of all Mr. Kenyon's kindnesses, I value none so much as his having brought him and his family here. My father was as much charmed with him as I was. The Sedgwicks are very likeable, and there is a freedom from cant about the authoress, which, considering the do-me-good nature of her books, I could not have anticipated. Certainly the Pickwick countenance, as given in the prints, *is* like our dear friend, and I presume that consciousness has made him throw off his spectacles; but he is, with all his kindness, a great deal too shrewd and clever for that very benevolent and rather simple personage.

The Websters spoke of you with real affection; it was nothing less; and I have a letter from that warm-

hearted person, Mrs. Opie, so delighted with Mary! Our best love to you all.

Ever, my dear friend,

Most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

The book is finished, somehow. At the last I was incapable of correcting the proofs, literally fainting on the ground.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Bath.*

Three Mile Cross, Sept. 21, 1839.

[*The beginning of this letter is irreparably defaced.*]

——on the contrary, it is one of the qualities with which I have the most sympathy; and my admiration for, and interest in Daniel Webster, is a case in point.

Did I tell you his story? I think not; and if not, I must do so now. It happens oddly enough that Mr. Ticknor, who is his intimate friend and fellow-townsman, and from whom, oddly enough, I heard it five or six years ago, found nobody, except myself, who knew anything about Webster, and I had actually told it, long before I dreamt of his coming to England, to John Kenyon, William Harness, and many of his own now most intimate London friends. The knowledge of this, of course, threw almost a feeling of old acquaintanceship over our intercourse; and I think that when you read the story you will say that it is one of the most noble that ever occurred. His father was the son of a New England farmer, and took (as is common with them) an axe in one hand and a wife in the other, to "fix" in the backwoods as what is called a "squatter;" for *then* land might be had in those wild forests for the clearing. When Daniel was fifteen—till then he had been "a hewer of wood and a drawer of water"—he said to his

father: "Father, give me a few dollars and let me go to the Old States for some education; you have my eldest brother, who is your right hand, and plenty of younger boys; the clearing is large and the house comfortable; you can spare me, and I want to get a little education; give me what you can and let me go." The father did give him a few dollars, and very few. "Take these, boy; they are all I can spare, and make them last as long as you can; for when they are gone you must take care of yourself."

Well, Daniel set off to the next village, fifty miles off, where he found a school—better than our national schools, something, I suppose, like the Scotch schools—and by the time he was through that, he travelled on to the next town, where there was a college, not like Oxford or Cambridge, certainly, but much like Rugby school, a very excellent mixture of classical, scientific, and general literature. There he entered himself, and maintained himself, until he was the head youth there, by copying deeds for a lawyer at night. When he was, as I have said, first in every class, the lawyer said to him (for he was still in one of the New States), "If you wish to go to New England, I can give you a letter to a relation which will I am sure lead to a most excellent engagement now, and open the door to permanent fortune and distinction." Of course the offer was thankfully accepted, and the young man went home to his family to take leave of them and inform them of his prospects. On his arrival, he found the elder brother, whom I have mentioned, hungering and thirsting, as he had done, after education; he returned with him to his old master, the lawyer, re-engaged himself in his service, saw his brother through school and college, and only when he

was, like himself, the head boy in all the classes, went eastward to pursue his own course of prosperity and honour. Now this postponement of all his own hopes and aspirations—this total self-sacrifice and self-oblivion, does seem to me the very finest thing I ever heard in my life. Is it not noble in the highest degree? I asked if the brother had turned out well. The answer was that he had lived to justify the exertion—to prove that, if spared, he would have been the first lawyer in Massachusetts, and then had died.

Daniel Webster is himself not more than fifty-five now —the first lawyer, orator, and statesman of America, certainly, and the next, or next but one, President. He is the noblest-looking man I ever saw, both in face and person. The portrait prefixed to his 'Speeches' does him great injustice, for his countenance is delightfully gracious—such a smile! and he is a broad, muscular, splendid figure. His manner, too, is all that one can imagine of calm, and sweet, and gracious—as charming as the Duke of Devonshire; as courteous even as that prince of courtesy, and equally free from condescension—whilst, amidst the perfect simplicity and gentleness there is great conversational power. His wife and daughters seem to adore his very footsteps; and he has conquered for himself a degree of real consideration and respect in London never before shown to any Transatlantic personage; least of all to a lion. My father adores him. I think he liked him even better than I did; and he says that he promised him to come again, and that he is sure he will keep his word.

I should like you to see Daniel Webster! When I tell you that expecting from him what I did, and hearing from twenty people, accustomed to see in perfect intimacy all distinguished people, that he alone gave them

the idea of a truly great man—when I say that he exceeded our expectations by very far; you may imagine what he is. I am to send them all my flower seeds, and they are to send me all theirs. I chose the Murder Speech (is it not wonderfully fine? like Sheil, without the tawdriness, I think) to read to my father, because *that* is free from the alloy, to an English ear, of allusions intelligible across the water, but not to us. Two very clever friends of ours went to Oxford to hear him speak, and they say that they would walk there again, and back, to hear him only speak the same speech over again! Is not that praise?

God bless you, my beloved friend! We have had six days' and nights' incessant rain, and, if succeeded by frost, we shall have no seed ripen of anything.

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To JOHN LUCAS, ESQ., *Newman Street, London.*

Sunday, Oct. 27, 1839.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I can't help writing one line, although you will find a letter of mine in town which has not yet reached you, to tell you, from the bottom of my heart, how much I rejoice at what you tell me of the Duke of Wellington—God bless him! The great captain is an equally good judge of pictures and of men; and, having once adopted you as his painter, will never change. So that you will go down to posterity together, an honour to both; for even his great name will derive a fresh lustre from his choice of an artist so certain to justify his choice. I don't know when anything has given so much gratification to my father and myself.

Poor Haydon! What you will be, he, with pru-

dence, steadiness, good sense, and modesty (for conceit has been his worst enemy), might have been. He had power, and with the cultivation of higher and better intellectual and moral qualities, he might have had taste—for taste *is* a moral quality. But he surrounds himself with flatterers, he becomes hopelessly involved, and how can he paint then? That is the secret of his failure. And yet, remembering what he was, and what he might have been, one still says, Poor Haydon! I am glad that you have seen him, and that he thinks of me kindly.

My father's kindest love. Ever, my dear friend,

Most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *London.*

Three Mile Cross,
Tuesday night, Oct. 29, 1839.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I expect this letter to be franked by Mr. Sergeant Talfourd, who has been at Reading this week past, and from whom I have received an exceedingly affectionate and cordial note, although we have not met yet. It is a note that breathes more of the old spirit of intimacy and sympathy than any which I have received from him for years. He says that he knows nothing more than the newspapers tell him, "of any design to make him that awful thing a judge, or that perilous (perhaps ruinous) one, a solicitor-general." These are his words. Where is Mr. Kenyon? Does Mr. Webster return to England? Have I any chance of seeing any of you?

Ever, my dear friend, most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Torquay.*

Three Mile Cross, Jan. 3, 1840.

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

My father and I sat to-night looking at the fire in silence and in sadness, the wind rising and sighing with its most mournful rather than its more threatening sound through the branches, from which the snow was falling silently—contradicting by sight and feeling (for the cold was intense) the evidence of another sense, as the double Roman narcissus and the white and purple hyacinths shed their delicious fragrance from the window—my father and myself sat pensively over the wood fire, until he said suddenly, "You are thinking of dear Miss Barrett; so was I. God bless her! How long is it since you have heard from her?" Every night at that time I had thought of you, my sweetest, sitting over the glowing embers, and at last I determined to write to you before I slept. I have told you of my little girl, Agnes Niven, just twelve years old. Her mother and I sometimes call her our pet lamb. She sent me this week a pair of delicate mittens, knit of the finest wool and silk, with the following stanza:

"A tuft of flax to a Grecian bride
Was ancient Hymen's offer;
A tuft of wool is England's pride:
What more can a pet-lamb offer?"

Are not these lines, with their combination of point and gracefulness, their Mr. Kenyon-like terseness and turn, very remarkable in a girl of that age?

I have been reading 'Jack Sheppard,' and have been struck by the great danger, in these times, of representing authority so constantly and fearfully in the wrong, so tyrannous, so devilish, as the author has been

pleased to portray it in 'Jack Sheppard;' for he does not seem so much a man, or even an incarnate fiend, as a representation of power—government or law, call it as you may—the ruling power. Of course Mr. Ainsworth had no such design, but such is the effect; and as the millions who see it represented at the minor theatres will not distinguish between now and a hundred years back, all the Chartists in the land are less dangerous than this nightmare of a book, and I, Radical as I am, lament any additional temptations to outbreak, with all its train of horrors. Seriously, what things these are—the Jack Sheppards, and Squeers's, and Oliver Twists, and Michael Armstrongs—all the worse for the power which, except the last, the others contain! Grievously the worse!

My friend Mr. Hughes speaks well of Mr. Ainsworth. His father was a collector of these old robber stories, and used to repeat the local ballads upon Turpin, &c., to his son as he sat upon his knee; and this has perhaps been at the bottom of the matter. A good antiquarian I believe him to be, but what a use to make of the picturesque old knowledge! Well, one comfort is that it will wear itself out; and then it will be cast aside like an old fashion.

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr.*

Three Mile Cross, Feb. 19, 1840.

MY DEAR EMILY,

I must tell you of a suggestion which has been made to me, and which, upon mentioning it to Henry Chorley, he has taken up enthusiastically. Thirty

years ago, when I was a young woman, Sir William Elford, an old friend of my father's (they were great whist players, and used to meet at Graham's Club, in St. James's Street), took a fancy to me as a girl of promising talents, and being himself even then elderly (he died four or five years ago at the age of ninety*), and an excellent letter-writer (there was something of Horace Walpole's mixture of humour and courtliness about his style), he coaxed me into a correspondence, which, although it languished latterly, he living out of the world, and I having too much writing on my hands already, had yet been of no small use to me, as giving me a command of my pen, and the habit of arranging and expressing my thoughts. He always said that none of my writings were so pleasant as those letters; and Miss Elford, upon looking them over this winter, urged me to print them. I named the thing to Mr. Kenyon, and he advises it beyond all measure. Do you? I thought at first of appearing as editor only, calling it 'Letters from the Valley' (you remember Mrs. Grant's 'Letters from the Mountains,' and what a run they had), or 'Letters from a Young Lady to an Elderly Gentleman.'

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Torquay.*

Three Mile Cross, March 3, 1840.

I had a kind message from Captain Marryat once, when somebody whom he knew was coming here, but have never seen him. Without being one of his indiscriminate admirers, I like parts of his books (some of which I have read to my father), and have been told

* He died in 1837.

that they have done good in the profession—suggestions thrown out in them having been taken up and acted upon by the Lords of the Admiralty; and, although a Tory, he takes part with the common sailors. Did I tell you that, the day I wrote in the midst of a quantity of people, a niece of the late Mr. Trollope called, and a nephew of Mrs. Trollope's—both twins, she having a twin sister and he a twin brother. Odd, is it not?

Did you know Dr. Parry? I did; and it is really sad how every lion, who behaves as if he thought himself a lion, shrinks into a very tame menagerie wild beast when one comes before him face to face. I suspect that Sir Walter was about the only one that thoroughly stood the test, and poor Mrs. Hemans, because both were honest lovers of society, with no exclusive veneration for their own books, and therefore came within the exceptive clause in my first sentence.

Heaven bless you, my dearest! I am better, but have had two or three returns of sickness. These winds!

Yours ever,

M. R. M.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, July 25, 1840.

——The land comprising our garden is to be sold, and will probably be purchased by some sordid person upon the speculation of making us pay an inordinate rent for the luxury. To me individually it would be a great release to be quit of the trouble and expense of the garden; but how to supply its place, both as an amusement and exercise to my dear father, I cannot tell. However, it is to be sold, and will probably be purchased and taken from us, for it is out of the question to think

of our paying any increase of rent. The lot, about an acre, is to be sold on the first of next month, so that this cause of alarm will soon be settled one way or another.

We had an interesting person here yesterday, Mary Duff, one of the Maries to whom Lord Byron was so devotedly attached. She is still a most lovely woman, not very tall, and full enough to prevent the haggard look which comes upon women who grow thin at fifty; of a bright clear complexion, with dark hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes, and hazel eyes, beautiful features, a most sweet and intelligent expression—with such a smile both of the eyes and the lips—an accent slightly Scottish, and a manner full of grace and charm.

My father being better, we made last week an excursion to Windsor. I had not been out before for ten months, nor had I even drunk tea from home, so completely have I been absorbed by the care of my father. Blessed be God, he bore the journey well! We found the private garden and terrace open at Windsor, and I walked all over that beautiful scene, not going into the apartments, which, in all their splendours, are less interesting to me than that magnificent mixture of matchless architecture and unrivalled situation. Nothing can exceed the blending of those great walls with tree and flower, as seen in the castle and the slopes. The day was exquisite, and the very air heavy with the rich perfume of the seringas and acacias. How I should have liked you to have been at my side! My father enjoyed it too; and I could not have believed that mere external circumstances could have given me so much gratification.

I am almost a prisoner in our little home and three miles round, and owe, doubtless, to that circumscription

the great pleasure which that rare thing, an excursion, gives me; so even-handed is fortune in dispensing her favours! They who eat pine-apple every day lose all consciousness of the flavour; we who taste it but once a year feel the fragrance of the aroma, the delicious sweetness and pungency of the fruit.

I have taken a great fancy to Mr. James's writings, and to Mr. James himself. I never saw him, and have only heard of him through Lady Madalina Palmer and Lady Sidmouth. When I have time (not, I fear, just yet) I will tell you about him. Heaven bless you, my very dear friend! Write to me.

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

[A friend of the Mitfords bought the garden above mentioned for their benefit, and added to it a small farmyard.]

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, Sept 2, 1840.

You will be glad to hear, my ever-dear love, that my father is better, and that consequently we, K.,* Flush, and myself, are also upon the mend; for most certainly it was his illness that overset all three. My present distress—and it is a most serious one—arises from the difficulty of uniting the two duties of giving to him the time which he needs for attendance and amusement, and of managing also to complete the book for Colburn, which is necessary for our subsistence. Nobody can conceive how much my dear father misses me, if only an hour absent. He could read, I think; but, somehow, to read to himself seems to give him no pleasure; and if any one else is so kind as to offer to read to him,

* The abbreviation by which she designated her maid Kerenhappuck.

that does not do. They don't know what he likes, and where to skip, and how to lighten heavy parts without losing the thread of the story. By practice I can contrive to do this, even with books that I have never seen before. There's an instinct in it, I think. So that I have been obliged to resume my old habits, and to read to him and play cribbage with him, during more hours of each day (every day except Sundays) than you could well believe.

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

CHAPTER VIII.

LETTERS FOR 1841.

To MISS BARRETT, *Torquay.*

Three Mile Cross, Jan. 14, 1841.

I WRITE, my beloved friend, by my dear father's bedside; for he is again very ill. Last Tuesday was the Quarter Sessions, and he *would* go, and he seemed so well that Mr. May thought it best to indulge him. Accordingly he went at nine A.M. to open the Court, sat all day next the chairman in Court, and afterwards at dinner, returning at two o'clock, A.M., in the highest spirits—not tired at all, and setting forth the next day for a similar eighteen hours of business and pleasure. Again he came home delighted and unwearied. He had seen many old and dear friends, and had received (to use his own words) the attentions which do an old man's heart good; and *these*, joined to his original vigour of constitution and his high animal spirits, had enabled him to do that which to those who saw him at home infirm and feeble, requiring three persons to help him from his chair, and many minutes before he could even move—would seem as impossible as a fall of snow between the tropics, or the ripening of pine-apples in Nova Zembla.

All this he had done, but not with impunity. He

has caught a severe cold; and having on Saturday taken nearly the same liberties at Reading, and not suffering me to send for Mr. May, until rendered bold by fear I did send last night—he is now seriously ill. I am watching by his bedside in deep anxiety; but as silence is my part to-night, and I have prayed (for when those we love—*so love*—are in danger, thought is prayer), I write to you, my beloved friend, as my best solace. Mr. May is hopeful; but the season, his age, my great and still increasing love, and the habit of anxiety which has grown from long tending, fill me with a fear that I can hardly describe. He is so restless too—so very, very restless—and everything depends upon quiet, upon sleep, and upon perspiration; and yet, for the last twelve hours I am sure that he has not been two minutes in the same posture, and not twelve minutes without his getting out of bed, or up in bed, or something as bad. God grant that he may drop asleep! I read to him until I found that reading only increased the irritability. Well, I do hope and trust that he is rather quieter now; and I am quite sure that I shall myself be quieter in mind, if I can but fix my thoughts upon you. Heaven be with you all!

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Torquay.*

Three Mile Cross, April 20, 1841.

How startling coincidences are! Sometimes how painful! Just as I had sent to you the little jar of honey from Hymettus, brought from thence by Sir Robert Inglis, and sent to me by a dear old friend, Lady Sidmouth, two letters arrived from her at the same time, of which, that which bore the latest date, anticipated with delightful cheerfulness our speedy

meeting; and, not five minutes after despatching that trifling token of honour to the muse, I found, in reading the paper to my father, that poor Lady Sidmouth was dead! Imagine the shock! She was, you know, daughter of Lord Stowell, niece of Lord Eldon, and wife of Lord Sidmouth, all remarkable men in themselves, and connected with the most memorable personages of the last half-century. And fully worthy was she of such association.

I have seldom known any one more thoroughly awake and alive to all that was best worth knowing. She had an enlightened curiosity, a love of natural history, of antiquities, of literature, of art; was herself full of talent, intelligence, and gaiety, and had a quick and peculiar humour; the more surprising as her physical sufferings were great and constant. For many years she had suffered under a spine complaint—suffered to such an extent that, for very many years, instead of being (as she used to be) dragged between two strong supporters round my garden, she had been carried in the arms of an old servant into the greenhouse, and there deposited until her visit was over. In the fine season she used to pass many hours of every day in her carriage or in a garden chair; but frequently her sufferings were so severe that the perspiration would pour down her face from pain, and for days and weeks together she remained unable to see her favourite friends. She had submitted to that tremendous operation, the actual cutting down either side of the spinal column (I forget the technical phrase), but without any benefit; and had tried Dr. Jephson's system equally without success. Still, such was her sweetness, that Lord Sidmouth told me that some sculptor (I think Behnes) earnestly wished to be allowed to model her

face for the expression, which, as he said, was more full of lively sweetness than any he ever saw. She was twenty-seven years younger than the husband who now has to mourn her loss.

The first thing she did when coming into her father's large fortune was to portion her two step-daughters, each of whom had been for many years engaged to a man too poor to marry a poor lord's daughter. All her dealings about money were munificent in themselves and most graceful in the manner. She gave to the Berkshire Hospital six acres of land (valued at a thousand pounds an acre for building leases), standing on the finest situation of the outskirts of Reading, and told everybody that it was Lord Sidmouth's gift! And in the same way she built a new market cross in his name in the town of Devizes, of which he is High Steward.

I have lost a most kind and affectionate friend, one of the very many of whom the last two or three years have deprived me. Lord Sidmouth retains his unmarried daughter, who officiated as his private secretary when he was Prime Minister, and is a very cultivated and excellent person; but not to me what Lady S. was. We, indeed, had many mutual ties. Her father, like mine, was of Northumberland; and we had connections and friends near Newcastle—her cousins married to cousins of mine. The most amiable of these—a young and lovely girl of remarkable talent—died last autumn.

Everybody that loves me does die! Oh! take care of yourself, my very dearest! Did I tell you that her father, Lord Stowell (the Sir William Scott of Dr. Johnson's time) died at a very advanced age in a state worse than idiotcy? The old servants have told me that his expressions were awful. That must have been a great grief. Her only brother, too, killed himself by drinking. At

the same time that Lord Stowell was wearing out the dregs of life so painfully four miles on one side of us, Sir Henry Russell, the only other survivor of the 'Literary Club,' was lingering in equal imbecility four miles on the other; a remarkable and humbling fact to the pride of intellect.

At Stowell (poor Lady Sidmouth's estate) is a hazel coppice of such extent that all the fairs of the south of England are supplied from it with cob-nuts—the favourite present of a country lad to his sweetheart. Gipsies and other wanderers pitch their tents around it in the nutting season; and for three weeks the coppice is as populous as a vineyard or a hop-garden in their gathering-time. Poor dear Lady Sidmouth! how fond she was of distributing little bags of her own nuts, purchased from the licensed plunderers! You would have liked Lady Sidmouth.

[*The continuation of this letter is wanting.*]

To MISS JEPHSON, *Clifton.*

Three Mile Cross, May 1, 1841.

MY DEAREST EMILY,

I rejoice to hear such good news of your health. For the last week it has been finer than any we had during the whole of last summer, but without wind or scorching dryness—the hedges all bursting into foliage, and lilacs and horse-chestnuts in full bloom—in short (I am writing on May-day) the very May of the old poets. Heaven grant it last! I am better, but my father is out of spirits and very feeble. Ben, too, has been very ill indeed.

What a sad, sad tragedy that life of Sir Walter is! How much, in its splendour and its melancholy close, does

it resemble the course of Napoleon. And surely the same ambition ran through both, only taking a different direction. I love his works. Strange that no one stretched out a hand to save him! But all literary people die over-wrought; it is the destiny of the class. Poor Southey! his fate is equally or even more deplorable—and excellent men they were both.

Can you suggest to me a story for a tragedy? The hero must be a young man? Mrs. Kean wants me to write one for her son Charles. I want, chiefly, some very interesting story as a groundwork for the play. Think of this, my dearest. I know nobody so likely to hit upon a good plot. The hero must be young and interesting—must have *to do*, and not merely suffer. Heaven bless you!

Ever faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Torquay.*

Three Mile Cross, June 20, 1841.

I have not written to you, my beloved friend, because until to-day I could have given you no pleasure. I have been very ill, but I am now getting well. Did I tell you that just before I took to my bed I drove out with K—— for a few miles?—very ill *then*. About four miles from home one of the traces came undone. The horse (an old Irish thoroughbred) feeling the trace beat against his side, began kicking; and the splashing-board of our little chaise being very high, so that he could do no harm, galloped off at a speed such as few horses could have exceeded. He trod upon the trace and broke it—a fresh jerk and an additional fright. We met men, ten or twelve; we passed a turn-

pike-gate, but the men flew from us as we passed; the gate was flung open (wisely, or the horse, an excellent leaper, would have taken it), and for a mile and a half we had as close a view of death as has happened to many people. K—— behaved bravely. She gave me the whip, or rather I took it from her, and wound the reins round her arms to increase her power. At last, the remaining trace brought the collar into such a position as to half choke the horse; and a boy driving a donkey across the road, we stopped—I so frightened that I could not stand. We were forced to be tied up with string and led home. If I had not been ill I should have stood it better; as it was, I kept it from my father till next day, when it became necessary to tell him for fear he should hear it from another. And since then I have been very ill, or rather, I was very ill, and now I am getting better. But I have not sent for Mr. May. I very seldom do; it frightens my father.

After all, a wretched life is mine. Health is gone; but if I can but last while my dear father requires me; if the little money we have can but last; then it would matter little how soon I, too, were released. We live alone in the world, and I feel that neither will long outlast the other. My life is only valuable as being useful to *him*. I have lived for him and him only; and it seems to me, God, in His infinite mercy, does release those who have so lived, nearly at the same time. The spring is broken and the watch goes down. Have you not seen it so?

I have been reading Mr. Blanchard's life of poor L. E. L. When looking into the chronology you will be struck with the closeness of the two events—the acceptance of Mr. McLean and the other affair of the rejection. There was another, too, about the same time,

Mr. C—— tells me. Then Mr. Blanchard alludes to the scandals of different persons (I don't remember the words, but they implied scandals regarding more than one), and the very manner in which our very slight intercourse is mentioned proves that there was a dearth of female friends. She had written to ask me to write something for somebody, and apologised for addressing me as 'My dear Miss Mitford.' I, of course, replied, as you will see.

Poor thing! The book is to me deeply affecting. She was a fine creature thrown away; and just when that mysterious event occurred there seemed to me more hope and chance of happiness, and more development of power, and (which is more important than either) a greater chance for goodness and usefulness than there had ever been before. Poor thing! Nothing seems to me so melancholy as the lives of authors—Sir Walter Scott, Mrs. Hemans, this of Miss Landon. I hardly know an exception. And these are the successful! Heaven bless you!

Ever yours,
M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Torquay.*

Three Mile Cross, June 28, 1841.

First, my beloved friend, let me answer your most kind inquiries. I am greatly better. It has been a most remarkable escape; but a real escape. I cannot yet turn in my bed; but when up I get about astonishingly well. To say truth, I am, and always have been, a very active person—country-born and country-bred—with great fearlessness and safety of foot and limb. Even *since* this misfortune, Ben having said that half

the parish had mounted on a hayrick close by to look at the garden, which lies beneath it (an acre of flowers rich in colour as a painter's palette), I could not resist the sight of the ladder, and one evening when all the men were away, climbed up to take myself a view of my flowery domain. I wish you could see it! Masses of the Siberian larkspur, and sweet Williams, mostly double, the still brighter new larkspur (*Delphinium Chinensis*), rich as an oriental butterfly—such a size and such a blue! amongst roses in millions, with the blue and white Canterbury bells (also double), and the white foxglove, and the variegated monkshood, the carmine pea, in its stalwart beauty, the nemophila, like the sky above its head, the new erysimum, with its gay orange tufts, hundreds of lesser annuals, and fuchsias, zinnias, salvias, geraniums past compt; so bright are the flowers that the green really does not predominate amongst them!

Yes! I knew you would like those old houses! Orkwells surpasses in beauty and in preservation anything I ever saw. Our ancestors were rare architects. Their painted glass and their carved oak are unequalled.

Heaven be with you, my dearest!

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *Heathcote Street.*

Three Mile Cross, July 22, 1841.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have to entreat of you that you will suffer so much money as may be necessary to pay our debts to be taken from that in Mr. Blandy's hands—say the two hundred pounds lately paid in. The necessity for this has arisen, partly from the infamous conduct of Messrs. Finden, but

chiefly from my dear father's state of health and spirits, which has made me little better than a nurse; and, lastly, from my own want of strength, which has prevented my exerting myself, as I ought to have done, to remedy these disappointments. Nobody, to see me, would believe the wretched state of my health. Could you know all I have to undergo and suffer, you would rather wonder that I am alive, than that (joined to all I have to do with my dear father, reading to him, waiting upon him, playing at cribbage with him, and bearing, *alone*, the depression of a man once so strong and so active, and now so feeble)—you would rather wonder that I have lived through this winter than that I have failed to provide the means of support for our little household.

I am, however, rather better now, and feel that, if relieved from this debt, which weighs me down, I shall (as I have told my dear father that I must) rather seem to neglect him in the minor points of reading to him, &c., than again fail in working at my desk. Be assured that, if you enable me to go to my writing with a clear mind, I shall not again be found wanting. It has been all my fault now, and if that fault be visited upon my father's white head, and he be sent to jail for my omissions, I should certainly not long remain to grieve over my sin, for such it is. It is a great trial, for my father has never, for the last four years, been two months without some attack of immediate danger, and the nursing and attending him are in themselves almost more than can be done by a person whose own state of health involves constant attention and leaves her well-nigh exhausted and unnerved in mind and body. But I see now that a portion of the more fatiguing part of this attendance (say the reading aloud) must be relinquished, and, however grievous, it *shall* be so, for the

more stringent duty of earning our daily bread. I will do this, and you, I am sure, will enable me to go with a free mind to my task; I am sure that you will do so. It would be a most false and mistaken friendship for me, which should induce you to hesitate, for my very heart would be broken if aught should befall his grey hairs.

In sanctioning the appropriation of the two hundred pounds now in Mr. Blandy's hands, you will relieve my dear father's mind and mine, and enable me to work with a free and willing spirit. If you refuse, *he* may be sent to jail, which he would not survive; or if he survived, it would be with a spirit so broken that he would never leave his arm-chair, which (to say nothing of the misery) would totally disable me from working in any way. Or there is a third probability, worse than either; that such a catastrophe would bring on seizure and not death, and that, for months and years, he might linger a living corpse, alive only to suffering. I say this, because I know that you, from the kindest of motives, would think more of my future interest than of immediate relief; and I do assure you that your refusal would very, very probably prevent there being any future to provide for; since I am quite sure that, if I saw my dear, dear father hurried in this way from the world, driven to death or to mortal sickness through my fault, I could never for an instant know happiness again, and should probably, most probably, fill the same grave.

My dear father has, years ago, been improvident; he still is irritable and difficult to live with; but he is a person of a thousand virtues—honest, faithful, just, and true, and kind. There are very, very few half so good in this mixed world. It is my fault that this money is needed—entirely my fault; and, if it be

withheld, I am well assured of the consequences to both: law proceedings will be commenced; my dear father will be overthrown mind and body; and I shall never know another happy hour. I feel after this that you will not refuse me the kindness that I ask. Let me have a letter (authorising the appropriation of this money) to Mr. Blandy; whose kindness is, and has been, constant and undeviating. I cannot believe that you will refuse this great favour; it will be a most mistaken kindness if you do.*

Love to the Maries, and all happiness to you all!

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

This has been a summer of extraordinary escapes. Six weeks back I was dragged by a friend, who was handing me over the rafters in an unfloored room, across the joists, a depth of four feet and a half—a terrible jar upon the spine, which I have only just recovered; and two nights ago I was writing with a low candle by the side of the desk when the frill of my nightcap (the edging of the border) took fire. I saw and felt the flames. Everybody was in bed and asleep. My hands trembled so that I could not undo the strings of the cap, and I flung myself upon the ground and extinguished it with the hearthrug; frightening nobody except poor dear little Flush, who was asleep on my father's chair, but (roused I suppose by the smell of fire) sate up, with his beautiful eyes dilated to three times their usual size fixed upon me, shaking as if in an ague, and whining with distress. He nearly devoured me with caresses when I went to him. My head was a

* The money, of course, was conceded; but it was a sad diminution of the little that remained of her mother's once large fortune.

good deal scorched (it was a very startling sensation to see and feel the flames), but the immediate application of Goulard prevented any mischief; and I am so thankful not to have alarmed my father or indeed any one.

To Miss Jephson, *Clifton.*

Three Mile Cross, August 16, 1841.

——— Flush is quite well again, and likely to prove one of the best sporting dogs in the country. My father has received a hundred applications for him; amongst them is one from Mr. Pusey, one of the Members for Berkshire, and elder brother of the Dr. Pusey who is associated with Mr. Newman in the 'Oxford Tracts,' and the promulgation of the tenets which pass by his name. Mr. Newman is, besides his power as a preacher, a man of extensive acquirement and much elegant accomplishment. My friends the Carys (son and daughter-in-law of the translator of Dante) are very intimate with Mr. Newman and very fond of him. His power in Oxford is extraordinary. You can't go into any of the halls on a fast day of the Church without seeing four or five young men dining upon bread and water. It is a perfect resuscitation of Archbishop Laud—for they cling to their own peculiar notions, which are a sort of English Papistry, and yet abjure the real old Popish doctrine with great zeal. That Mr. Newman is a man of remarkable power and perfect sincerity, I have no doubt. I have some of the 'Oxford Tracts,' and shall borrow his sermons the first time I see Mrs. Cary. Adieu!

Yours most affectionately,

M. R. M.

I can quite enter into your delight at the hanging up an old family portrait. We have one, of my grand-

father Russell, which carries one back to the age of Pope, whom, indeed, he remembered.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, Nov. —, 1841.

The Websters have again written to me—so kindly! There is a chance, Mr. Kenyon says, of his coming here as American minister, inasmuch as General Harrison will certainly supersede Mr. Van Buren, who was expected at one time to be re-elected. The reason is curious: some partisan of Van Buren's, speaking most scornfully of Harrison, said, "Here is a President, forsooth! a man who lives in a log hut and drinks hard cider!" Now 100,000 electors do live in log huts, and 200,000 drink hard cider; so all their party papers are now printed with a portrait of General Harrison on one side and a barrel of cider on the other; and this unlucky taunt of Van Buren's friend will bring Harrison in!

Another piece of American news is very sad: three or four years ago, two Theodore Sedgwicks, father and son, were staying with us for ten days. The younger, an only son, was a young man of great talent. He returned to America and succeeded to his uncle's business as a lawyer in New York. The father, who lived three hundred miles off on the borders of New England, went to hear him plead (they unite there the advocate and attorney as in our provinces), and was so affected that he dropped down dead in Court. He was not old, and a tall, spare man, very unlikely to die a sudden death; but the pleasure and the excitement acting on his strong paternal feeling were too much for him. Is not this melancholy?

You have heard, I suppose, of the sad state of poor Southey; the mind gone—dark depression and utter

failure of intellect—overworn. It is very, very sad! Mr. Kenyon, who has been travelling with Mr. Bezzi, tells me a most interesting story of the manner in which his friend has caused a portrait of Dante to be discovered which had been lost for two centuries. There was a tradition that, under the whitewash of a painting in one of the prisons in Florence, a fresco containing such a portrait existed. Mr. Bezzi went to the authorities and said that he and some English gentlemen were prepared to undertake the process (a tedious and somewhat expensive one) of cleaning the picture; but that he, though a naturalised Englishman, was born an Italian, and could not bear that any foreigners should gain the credit, or the Florentines incur the odium attending such a proceeding. The result was that the authorities did undertake it, and that a magnificent fresco has been disclosed, containing by far the most striking portrait of the great poet now in existence. Mr. Bezzi, as I think I must have told you, was an exile on account of his connexion with the Silvio Pellico plot. By-the-by, Silvio himself is now a monk and a celebrated preacher, such a change was probable, I think, from his book.

My father is so anxious for a cow, that I cannot object, else the buying the cow, the fitting-up the dairy and cow-house, and the purchasing the different utensils will come, I suppose, to thirty pounds. And, if Finden heard of my having incurred the expense, I would not wonder if he laid hold of it as an excuse for not merely delaying what he owes me, but for not paying me at all! However, I must hope as long as I can, and work as hard.

What a letter this is! Heaven be with you!

Ever faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Dec. 30, 1841.

——— Mr. Hughes, too, told me the other day of a dream of a friend of his father's, a country gentleman of fortune and character. He thought that his gardener was digging a pit in a certain part of his garden; he watched him, wondering what it could be, until it assumed the form of a grave. Then the gardener went away and fetched the body of a young woman, in whom he recognised his own dairymaid, and deposited the corpse in the ground, and shovelled the earth over it. Then he awoke. He awakened his wife and told her his dream. "Nonsense," said she; "go to sleep again; it is the nightmare." Again he went to sleep, and the dream returned. He again awakened his wife, and she, although a little startled, persuaded him that it had arisen from some talk which they had had respecting the dairymaid's appearance; and at last he composed himself to sleep once more. For the third time the dream returned, and then, arming himself with his pistols, he walked down into the garden. At the very spot indicated he saw the gardener just finishing the operation of digging the grave, and rushing upon him suddenly, the man in his panic confessed that the dairymaid was pregnant by him; that she had threatened to appeal to her mistress; that he had appointed to meet her in a retired part of the grounds at that very hour; and that, in short, if not prevented by his master, before the sun rose the poor young woman would have lain murdered in the pit before them. *This* is a certain fact.

K——, a young woman of remarkable intelligence and presence of mind, has told me frequently of an appearance that she saw, about five years back, when living

with a respectable grocer in Buckinghamshire—not as servant but as shopwoman. Her bedroom opened into an anteroom common to two or three chambers belonging to the family. In this room a rushlight was burnt, and she had the habit of leaving her door open, and, after laying her head down upon the pillow, of half rising to look if the rushlight were safe. Two of her brothers and a favourite cousin were at sea in different merchant vessels, and she had that evening expressed to the grocer's daughter her strong impression that she should never see her cousin again. On raising herself up, as usual, to look at the light, she saw just before her, standing in the doorway, the figure of a young sailor. She felt that *it* was no living man: the head drooped on the bosom, and the straw hat fell over the face, which she could not discern. The dress was the usual jacket and trousers, the open shirt, and loosely-tied neckerchief of a seaman. It might have been, from height and appearance, either her elder brother or her cousin. She believed it to be the latter, and spoke to it by his name. It made no answer—but remained during two or three minutes, and then slowly and gradually melted into air. She was as strongly convinced of the reality of the appearance as of her own existence, and is so still.

Both her cousin and her brother returned to London, but the former had had a fall from some part of the rigging of the vessel on that very day (the day of his apparition), and died on shore without her seeing him. Nor has she again seen her elder brother, who, shortly after his return, sailed on another voyage and must have been lost at sea, since, although four years have elapsed since he was expected, neither he nor the vessel have ever been heard of; indeed the underwriters have paid the insur-

ance-money. K—— was not alarmed, she said; the only painful sensation was the immediate fear that something had occurred to one or other of these dear relatives, and she shall always, she says, be sure that *it* was her cousin who appeared to her. I believe that these are her very words, and I have no doubt whatever that she did see what she describes; nor would you if you could hear the truthful simplicity, the graphic minuteness, and the invariable consistency with which she relates both the apparition and her own feelings on the occasion. The story, as she tells it, is exceedingly impressive, from the absence of exaggeration and of those circumstances which are usually thrown in for the sake of effect. The door opening upon the staircase was fastened, bolted within; no man slept in the house except the master of the shop, a grave elderly man who officiated as a Wesleyan minister, and whom no money would have bribed into attempting a trick upon such a subject; and the females, besides a general coincidence of character with their husband and father, were all considerably shorter, and in every respect different from the figure in question. K—— has never used the word ghost or spirit or apparition, in speaking to me; she generally says '*it*,' and certainly thinks of the appearance with great awe.

I agree partly with you that there are glimpses of another world. It seems impossible to refer all these well-attested stories to imposition or credulity.

Another story I remember well. Old Mr. Knyvett, the king's organist (George the Third's—one of whose favourite pleasures it was to hear this splendid musician play and sing the 'Hallelujah Chorus' upon a grand pianoforte thrown open—I have heard it often; a wonderful feat it was, accomplished by a perfect knowledge of

the score, wonderful dexterity of hand, and a matchless power and compass of voice)—this old man, a wit and a jester, one whose sin was levity—lightness not of conduct but of speech—the very reverse of superstition—this wag lived at a pretty village near Reading, called Sonning, a river-side village reached by a deep winding lane, now shaded by tall close hedgerows, now by the high irregular paling of Holme Park. Over the latter at one particular point, regularly as the clock struck twelve (and it was within hearing both of the church clock and of that belonging to the park) a woman was seen to emerge from the shady lane and disappear *over* the paling—rising gradually and sinking slowly—always the same figure, dressed in the costume of the middle of the last century, and with the self-same disposition and fluctuation of drapery—not a hair's breadth more or less. There was no background to form a phantasmagoria deception, since the part plainest to be seen was the figure as it rose and sank above the paling. When the moonlight was strong the apparition appeared semi-transparent. I have heard Mr. Knyvett speak in answer to a sceptical friend of his and mine, upon this subject—in answer only, for voluntarily he never approached the topic; and the manner in which this thorough man of the world trembled and quivered—cheek and lip blanching as the topic was approached—the doubtful half-glance around and behind him, and the low tremulous voice I shall never forget. It would have been a study for a tragedian in 'Hamlet,' for it was real. I do not disbelieve in the possibility of such appearances, though I heartily agree with Stilling in the sinfulness and danger of seeking them. By danger, I mean the peril lest such presumption should be punished by madness, or such tremor as is one form of that awful inflic-

tion; or by fits or other physical infirmities brought on by mortal fear.

I wonder, my sweetest, how you will get through this sadly tedious scrawl. My father has a grievous cough: it is while in and out of his room that I have written, partly on a low stool at the foot of the bed, using a chair as my table.

Once, again, Heaven be with you!

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

CHAPTER IX.

Letters for 1842.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr.*

Three Mile Cross, Jan. 10, 1842.

My dear Emily,

I passed one evening in town with dear Mr. Lucas. He is painting Prince Albert just now, and speaks very highly of him, and of his knowledge and love of art especially. He says that he could not speak with more taste of painting if he had studied under Raphael. At Mr. Lucas's I met Mr. Brown, the young artist who, under the name of 'Phiz,' has so much aided Mr. Dickens's reputation. He has just returned from Brussels, where he had been spending three weeks with Mr. Lever ('Harry Lorrequer,' &c.). Of him he speaks enthusiastically, as the pleasantest man in the world, his store of anecdote never flagging for a moment. I like Mr. Brown himself exceedingly.

I long to be able to earn money. On myself I spend none. That's all I can do. I have not bought a bonnet, a cloak, a gown, hardly a pair of gloves, for four years; but I dare not touch my father's comforts, and therefore have gone on as usual with all that concerns him, in hopes that my little property may last while he needs it. For me it's of very little consequence. I feel that my vocation is to attend him, and that, when that is over, my poor life will go down like a watch

when the owner no longer winds it up, or out like a lamp, when the oil is spent. However, on the whole we are both better.

Mrs. Cox and Sir Richard and Lady Keane went to Buckingham Palace the other day, where Prince Albert showed them the little boy; a very lovely baby Mrs. Cox says he is. Mr. Wood told me that when the princess was born, Prince Albert was reading English law with a friend of his. He did not attend him for a week or two after; and when sent for, the Prince desired him to come with him and see the little girl. "But stop," said he, "you are cold, warm yourself well before we go up, or it may hurt the child." This amused me greatly; it was such a pretty piece of young fathership.

Adelaide Kemble is making four hundred pounds a month. It is a singular instance of hereditary talent. My precious Miss Barrett continues better. Is Daniel O'Connell going to be married to a girl of nineteen? The papers say so. Heaven bless you, my dearest Emily!

Ever most faithfully and affectionately yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, 50, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Jan. 13, 1842.

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

Mr. James, who might do better, has made a complete mistake (a wonder) about hanging in chains. At Mortimer Common, a beautiful tract of wild country, now for the most part planted, near us, there is an inclosure of one hundred or two hundred acres, chiefly covered with heath and gorse, and called 'The Gallows Piece;' because a murderer had been hanged in chains

there, on a bit of broken ground, the scene of his crime. I remember the relics of the gibbet, and finding a hare just under it, which poor May, after killing, brought to me in her mouth full half a mile, and laid down at my feet. We had an old keeper with us who took the opportunity of telling me the story of the murder and of the execution, at which he had been present (having known both the murderer and his victim), and which he described most graphically. The man was hanged with *a rope* till he was dead, cut down at the expiration of an hour, and then, instead of being placed in a shell, the body was fastened by irons to the gibbet; indeed, some of the rusty "gibbet arms" were still swinging and clanking overhead. My father confirmed this to-night, remembering the circumstance well, and having seen other criminals suspended in the same manner, and often shuddered at the peculiar creaking of the chains. This critique is rather too elaborate for the occasion; but an author like Mr. James ought to take care to be right. Scott did always. It is a part of *truth*, which in art as in everything, is a grace above all graces.

I hope that one day or other you will know Mrs. Niven. She is a very extraordinary person, the client in a very remarkable cause (she was a Miss Vordill) which, at the end of twenty-one years, she has just won; or rather it was decided in the House of Lords, after two or three adjournments, at the end of last session. The story is too long to tell to-night; but shortly, the question was, whether a Scotch marriage could pass an English estate? And such a marriage! So extreme a case! I must tell it. Her uncle—an old debauchee, living on his fine old place in the scenery which Scott copied in Ellangowan—finding that an old relation, a lady of title, was coming to his house to sleep on a

journey, ejaculated: "Eh! my leddy's coming and we maun hae a gude wife to receive her! Off wi' ye, loons, to Meg, and Jean, and Katie, and Beenie, and Bakie, and Beckie, and say that she that wins first to the house shall take possession and hae me into the bargain." Off set his myrmidons to all quarters to summon the usual seraglio, and the first that arrived was introduced to the "leddy," to her great horror; and as she happened to have a bare-legged boy of some twelve years old, this coarse frolic passed to that urchin eight thousand a year of Scottish estates, and cost more suits than I can well reckon; for it was litigated in every stage, until it arrived at the House of Peers, and argued there in three different sessions (chiefly on account of the obstinacy of Lord Brougham), in order to secure the English property to the real descendant, no drop of the true blood being in the veins of the boy, who came in so curious a way into the Scottish property; at least the probability is exceedingly against it, the mother being as bad as bad could be.

Heaven bless you! The books shall come back in a day or two, with some flowers.

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT.

Three Mile Cross, Jan. 21, 1842.

I could not, my beloved, honestly suffer my contract to go on without telling C—— what had happened; and he will assuredly make use of it to beat me down in the price. Oh! my dear, dear love, long, very long, may you be preserved in the blessed ignorance of pecuniary care! Never may you have to feel what it is to fear that the little you possess may not last while the one

you love best on earth requires it! Never to feel that you cannot supply to him that which habit has made indispensable! *I* feel these things pressing upon me like so many crimes. It seems to me that any one, with more firmness and more exertion, would put aside all else and work for him. I am sensible that one of stronger resolution would do more. God aid me! I only pray for strength and power to help that dear, dear father. Except for him my existence has no value to any earthly creature. But when I think of not being able to administer to his comforts, my very heart sickens within me.

Oh! my dear love, you cannot feel what that dreadful feeling is of one leaning upon you whilst you have no power to bear him up—of letting him fall through your own helpless weakness! Forgive my paining you in this way with a useless sympathy. But the expression is repressed to him, and sometimes it will have way. Forgive me, I implore you!

Heaven bless you!

Your own,
M. R. M.

To the Rev. William Harness, *Heathcote Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Feb. —, 1842.

I sit down with inexpressible reluctance to write to you, my ever dear and kind friend, because I well know that you will blame me for the occasion; but it must be said, and I can only entreat your indulgence and your sympathy. My poor father has passed this winter in a miserable state of health and spirits. His eyesight fails him now so completely that he cannot even read the leading articles in the newspaper. Accordingly, I have not only every day gone through the daily paper,

debates and all, which forms a sort of necessity to one who has so long taken an interest in everything that passes, but, after that, I have read to him from dark till bed-time, and then have often (generally) sat at his bedside almost till morning, sometimes reading, sometimes answering letters as he slept, expecting the terrible attacks of cramp, three or four of a night, during which he gets out of bed to walk the room, unable to get in again without my assistance. I have been left no time for composition—neither time nor heart—so that we have spent money without earning any.

What I have to ask of you, then, is to authorize Mr. Blandy to withdraw sufficient money to set us clear with the world, with a few pounds to start with, and then I *must* prefer the greater duty to the less—I must so far neglect my dear father as to gain time for writing what may support us. The season is coming on when he will be able to sit in the garden, and perhaps to see a few friends of an afternoon, and then this incessant reading will be less necessary to him. At all events the thing must be done, and shall. It was a great weakness in me, a self-indulgence, not to do so before, for the fault is entirely mine. I believe, when these debts are paid, his own spirits will lose that terrible depression, broken only by excessive irritability, which has rendered this winter such a scene of misery to himself and such a trial to me.

Do not fancy, my dear friend, that I cast the slightest blame on my dear father. The dejection and the violence belong to disease fully as much as any other symptom. If anybody be to blame, *I* am the person, for not having taken care that he should have no anxiety—nothing but age and infirmity—to bear. God forgive me for my want of energy! for suffering myself to be wholly engrossed by the easier duty of reading to

him! I will not do so again. Once a week he goes into Reading to the bench, and *then* he rallies; and nobody seeing him then could imagine what the trial is at home; and, with nobody but myself, it has been some excuse for getting through the day and the night as best I could, but it shall be so no longer.

Heaven bless you! Do not refuse me this most urgent prayer, and do not think worse of me than you can help! If you knew all that I have gone through this winter—alone, day after day, week after week—you would wonder that I am still left to cumber the earth. Nothing could bear up under it but the love that is mercifully given to the object of anxiety—such love as the mother bears to her sickly babe. Once again may Heaven bless you, my ever kind friend! Love to the Maries.

Ever gratefully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, March 2, 1842.

Since writing to you yesterday, my beloved friend, I have read in H. F. C——'s 'Music and Manners' the account of a visit which he made to Madame d'Abrantes, I think in '39. He speaks of the thing among Parisian contrasts. He went to see her, he says, in her two small rooms, humbly furnished; describes her as clumsy of figure, with dim eyes, a hoarse voice, and feverish spirits, and adds that the three last evils were caused by the excess of opiates in which she indulged. He says that the room rung with anecdote and repartee; that she took her full part of the noise; and that, in particular, she cajoled two or three black-bearded men, who wore 'Journalist' imprinted in visible letters on every hair

of their mustachios. He adds that a few months afterwards she died in a hospital; that almost at the last a party of visitors going through the wards, one of the nurses pointed her out to their notice, on which the dying woman exclaimed, "Are you making a show of me?" Think of the ambassadress, the governess of Paris, the vice-queen of Portugal labouring as a bookseller's drudge; fancy the wife of Napoleon's first aide-de-camp and friend, the companion of Josephine, of Hortense, of Duroc, of Madame Mère, forced to court such creatures as Balzac has painted in the 'Journalists of Paris!'

Is poor King Louis still alive? Hortense is dead, I know. And is the captive of Ham the single or the married brother? One of the two remaining sons of Louis died, I think; but, of these two, one was the husband of a daughter of his uncle Joseph, so that *he* would unite hereafter every right to the Crown that the settlement under the Empire could give. This, I suppose, is Louis Philippe's excuse.

Now, good-night! It has just occurred to me that when a young girl, some eleven years old or less, I went with my father to the pit of one of the theatres—Drury Lane, I believe; yes, Drury Lane—to see a tragedy from 'The Monk.'* Kemble played the hero, and Mrs. Siddons the heroine. *She* had to go into a dungeon where a frail nun had produced an infant, or rather she had to come out of a small door on to the stage, with the supposed baby in her arms. The door was what is technically called "practicable," that is to say, a *real* door, frame and all, made to open in the scene, and to sustain the illusion of a dungeon, as well as in that huge stage such an illusion can be sustained —for, paradoxical as it sounds, so many are the discre-

* Sotheby's 'Julia and Agnes.' 1800.

pancies in the present ambitious state of scenery, that I am quite convinced that in the days of Shakespeare, when all was trusted to the imagination of the spectator, the fitting state of willing illusion was much more frequently obtained than now—however, to make the scene as dungeon-like as possible, the door was deeply arched, hollow and low; and Mrs. Siddons, miscalculating the width, knocked the head of the huge wax doll she carried so violently against the wooden framework that the unlucky figure broke its neck with the force of the blow, and the waxen head came rolling along the front of the stage. Lear could not have survived such a *contretemps*. The theatre echoed and re-echoed with shouts of laughter, and the tragedy being comfortably full of bombast, not only that act, but the whole piece, finished amidst peals of merriment unrivalled since the production of 'Tom Thumb.' I remember it as if it were yesterday.

Ever most affectionately yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, March 24, 1842.

Thanks upon thanks, my beloved friend, for the kindness which humours even my fancies. I am delighted to have the reading of Anna Seward's letters. Perhaps we both of us like those works which show us men and women as they are—faults, frailties, and all. I confess that I do love all that identifies and individualizes character—the warts upon Cromwell's face, which, like a great man as he was, he would not allow the artist to omit when painting his portrait. Therefore I like Hayley, and therefore was I a goose of the first magnitude, when, for a passing moment, just by

way of gaining for the poor bard a portion of *your* good graces (for I did not want to gain for him the applause of the public—he had it, and lost it), I wished his editor to have un-Hayley'd him by wiping away some of the affectations—the warts—no—the rouge, upon his face.

My love and my ambition for you often seems to be more like that of a mother for a son, or a father for a daughter (the two fondest of natural emotions), than the common bonds of even a close friendship between two women of different ages and similar pursuits. I sit and think of you, and of the poems that you will write, and of that strange, brief rainbow crown called Fame, until the vision is before me as vividly as ever a mother's heart hailed the eloquence of a patriot son. Do you understand this? and do you pardon it? You must, my precious, for there is no chance that I should un-build *that* house of clouds; and the position that I long to see you fill is higher, firmer, prouder than ever has been filled by woman. It is a strange feeling, but one of indescribable pleasure. My pride and my hopes seem altogether merged in you. Well, I will not talk more of this; but at my time of life, and with so few to love, and with a tendency to body forth images of gladness and of glory, you cannot think what joy it is to anticipate the time. How kind you are to pardon my gossiping, and to like it.

God bless you, my sweetest, for the dear love which finds something to like in these jottings! It is the instinct of the bee, that sucks honey from the hedge-flower.

I made my father happy in reading what you say of Sir Robert: his eyes brightened like diamonds at the sound. For my part, I incline to think with one of Miss Edgeworth's heroines, that "he cannot be so very

artful as is said, because everybody does say so." The perfection of cunning is to conceal its own quality. Mortally dull are those debates. I rather have a fancy for Mr. Roebuck, who is as cantankerous and humorous (in the old Shakesperian sense) as Cassius himself. I would know him at any time by half a line—so perfectly in keeping are his speeches—which is more than I can say for any of the rest.

Certainly, in point of wearisome insipidity Sir Robert and Lord John are well matched one against the other. Did it ever occur to you to hear the debates read aloud for a whole session? The impression upon me is the exceeding want of power, the flat mediocrity, the total absence of anything like eloquence. I remember a few years ago reading speeches by O'Connell in one of the Irish papers, which, with the faults of Irish oratory, had yet life and power. Now, so far as we have hitherto gone, I really have not met with a single speech that might not have been delivered by any tolerably-taught schoolboy. After all, these men are no such marvels.

Did you ever read Holcroft's Memoirs? If not, I think you would like them. I did *exceedingly*. He was a poor boy, who carried Staffordshire ware about the country; then he exercised the horses at Newmarket. Do read it; I know nothing more graphic or more true. Do you know his comedy, 'The Road to Ruin?' The serious scenes of that play, between the father and son, are amongst the most touching in the language.

Dear Mr. Kenyon! How true in him the feeling always is! How few wits are like him—so bright, so playful, and yet so exquisitely kind! Heaven bless you, my beloved!

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, March —, 1842.

I have only read the first volume of Madame D'Arblay's 'Diary.' Dr. Johnson appears to the greatest possible advantage—gentle, tender, kind, and true; and Mrs. Thrale—oh, that warm heart! that lively sweetness! My old governess* knew her as Mrs. Piozzi, in Wales. She was there as a governess—neglected, uncared for, as governesses too often are; and that sweetest person sought her out, brought her forward, talked to her, wrote to her, gave her heart and hope and happiness. There have been few women who have used riches, and the station that riches give, so wisely as Mrs. Piozzi. I used to ask, "Was she happy?" and the answer was, "I hope so; but her animal spirits were so buoyant—she was so entirely one of those who become themselves cheered by the effort to cheer another—that the question is more difficult to answer than if it concerned one of a temper less elastic." As to the little Burney, I don't like her at all, and that's the truth. A girl of the world—a woman of the world, for she was twenty-seven or thereabout—thought clearly and evidently of nothing on this earth but herself and 'Evelina.'

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, April 4, 1842.

I am an inconsistent politician, I confess it, with my aristocratic prejudices and my radical opinions. By-and-by, perhaps, when education is more diffused,

* Miss Rowden, afterwards Mrs. St. Quintin.

these prejudices may lose their ground; at present there is certainly a great difference between the well-born, well-bred, simple, frank, and gentle people who had grandfathers, and the fine, fussy pretenders who have never known such progenitors. All the Whigs seem to me, in all their measures, afraid of the people—afraid to make any popular concession. Moore said once, in my hearing, that he "liked the Whigs when they were out of power." And certainly they are better then. But even then they seem as if always guarding against whole measures—devoted to bit-by-bit legislation. If they had flung themselves upon the people heartily and honestly, they might have set the Tories at defiance. Free trade—that seems to me the one great want now; and I cannot but believe that we shall live to see the principles advocated by Grote and Warburton (neither of them now in Parliament), in the ascendant. O'Connell is versatile in his words and ways, and the Repeal seems to me incomprehensible; nevertheless, *as an Irishman* (for doubtless he looks upon us as the English enemy), I cannot but think him a great patriot. And if you had but to read all those dull speeches you would feel the relief of coming across his eloquence.

Ever your own,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, April 9, 1842.

It will help you to understand how impossible it is for me to earn money as I ought to do, when I tell you that this very day I received your dear letter, and sixteen others; that then my dear father brought into my

room the newspaper to hear the ten or twelve columns of news from India; then I dined and breakfasted in one, then I got up. By that time there were three parties of people in the garden; eight others arrived soon after—some friends, some acquaintances, and some strangers; the two first classes went away, and I was forced to leave two sets of the last, being engaged to call upon Lady Madalina Palmer, who has an old friend of both on a visit at her house. She took me some six miles (on foot) in Mr. Palmer's beautiful plantations in search of that exquisite wild flower the buck-bean (do you know it—most beautiful of flowers? wild, or as K—— puts it, "tame?"). After long search we found the *plant*, not yet in bloom. Then I hurried home, threw my own cocoa down my throat, and read to my father Mrs. Cowley's Comedy, 'Which is the Man?' and here I am (after answering, as briefly as I can, many very kind letters), talking to you.

My father sees me greatly fatigued—much worn—losing my voice even in common conversation; and he lays it all to the last drive or walk—the only thing that keeps me alive—and tells everybody he sees that I am killing myself by walking or driving; and he hopes that I shall at last take some little care of myself and not stir beyond the garden. Is not this the perfection of self-deception? And yet I would not awaken him from this dream—no, not for all the world—so strong a hold sometimes does a light word take of his memory and his heart—he broods over it—cries over it! No, my beloved friend, we must for the present submit. There may be some happy change. He may himself wish me to go to town, and then——. In the meanwhile my heart is with you.

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To Miss Barrett, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, April 27, 1842.

No! my dear love, I am not now about to write on the subject of the South Seas. The first volume of any size that printed was on the story—which came to me from a friend of the American captain who visited them—of Christian's Colony on Pitcairn's Island. A large edition was sold. Then I published a second edition of a volume of miscellaneous poems; then another volume of narrative poems called 'Blanch and the Rival Sisters.' All sold well, and might have been reprinted; but I had (of this proof of tolerable taste I am rather proud) the sense to see that they were good for nothing, so that I left off writing for twelve or fifteen years, and should never have committed any more pen-and-ink sins, had not our circumstances become such as to render the very humblest exertions right. My dear mother's health was then almost what my father's is now; only then we were three, so that, except by staying at home, I was not so absolutely chained as I am now.

Well, perhaps if I could be all the time I covet, among the sweet flowers and the fresh grass, I should not enjoy as I do the brief intervals into which I do contrive to concentrate so much childish felicity. Who is it that talks of "the cowslip vales of England?" is it you, my beloved? The words are most true and most dear. Oh! how I love those meadows, yellow with cowslips and primroses; those winding brooks, or rather *that* winding brook, golden with the water ranunculus; those Silchester coppices, clothed with wood-sorrel, wood-anemone, wild hyacinth, and primroses in clusters as large as the table at which I write! I do not love musk—almost the only odour

called sweet that I do not love; yet coming this evening on the night-scented odora with its beautiful green cups, I almost loved the scent for the form on which it grew. But the cowslips, the wild hyacinths, the primroses, the violet—oh, what scent may match with theirs? I try to like the garden, but my heart is in the fields and woods. I have been in the meadows to-night—I ran away, leaving my father asleep—I could not help it. And oh! what a three hours of enjoyment we had, Flush, and the puppies, and I! I myself, I verily believe, the youngest-hearted of all. Then I have been to Silchester too. My father went there; and I got out and ran round the walls and coppices one way, as he drove the other. How grateful I am to that great gracious Providence who makes the most intense enjoyment the cheapest and the commonest! I do love the woods and fields! Oh! surely all the stars under the sun, even if they were brighter than those earthly stars ever seem to me, could not compare with the green grass and the sweet flowers of this delicious season!

I mistrust the feeling of poetry of all those who consent to pass the spring amongst brick walls, when they might come and saunter amongst lanes and coppices. To live in the country is, in my mind, to bring the poetry of Nature home to the eyes and the heart. And how can those who do love the country talk of autumn as rivalling the beauty of spring? Only look at the texture of the young leaves; see the sap mounting into the transparent twigs as you stand under an oak; feel the delicious buds; inhale the fragrance of bough and herb, of leaf and flower; listen to the birds and the happy insects; feel the fresh balmy air! This is a rhapsody; but I have no one to whom to talk, for if I mention it to my father, he talks of "my killing myself," as if

that which is balm and renovation were poison and suicide.

Heaven bless you, my most precious! My father's love.

Ever most faithfully your own,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, May 4, 1842.

Charlotte Smith's works, with all their faults, have yet a love of external nature, and a power of describing it, which I never take a spring walk without feeling. Only yesterday I strolled round the park-like paddock of an old place in our neighbourhood—an old neglected ride, overgrown with moss, and grass, and primroses, and wild strawberries—overshadowed by horse-chestnuts, and lilacs, and huge firs, and roses, and sweet briar, shot up to the height of forest trees. Exquisitely beautiful was that wild, rude walk, terminating in a decayed cart-house, covered with ivy; and, oh! so like some of her descriptions of scenery! My mother knew her when her husband was sheriff of Hampshire; and she lived in a place (about four miles from the little town of Alresford, where I was born) where the scenery and the story of the 'Old Manor House' may still be traced. There was a true feeling of nature about Charlotte Smith.

Of the three — Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge— how very much the greater poet Coleridge seems to me! Poor Cowper! I never doubted his insanity, knowing as I did his kinswoman, whose melancholy tale I must have told you (Mrs. Frances Hill, sister to the Eve Hill of the letters, and his first cousin) whose madness was always said to be hereditary. There could be no question of the taint in the blood. That the

hands into which he fell were not likely to administer the best remedies, even with the best and purest motives, there can be as little doubt. So you have actually seen and known one who believed in that melancholy tenet! I always held the imputation to be untrue: it seemed to be so impossible that any one mind could at once believe *that* and the mediation.

Yours ever,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, June 20, 1842.

MY DEAR LOVE,

It is now half-past one, and my father has only this very moment gone into his room to bed. He sleeps all the afternoon in the garden, and then would sit up all night to be read to. I have now several letters to answer before going to bed. At present, I write to say that on Saturday next (the very day on which you will receive this) we shall send you some flowers. Oh, how I wish we could transport you into the garden where they grow! You would like it—the "*entourage*," as Mrs. Mackie calls it, is so pretty: one side (it is nearly an acre of show flowers) a high hedge of hawthorn, with giant trees rising above it beyond the hedge, whilst all down within the garden are clumps of matchless hollyhocks and splendid dahlias; the top of the garden being shut in by the old irregular cottage, with its dark brickwork covered with vines and roses, and its picturesque chimneys mingling with the bay tree, again rising into its bright and shining cone, and two old pear trees festooned with honeysuckle; the bottom of the garden and the remaining side consisting of lower hedgerows melting into wooded uplands, dotted with white cottages

and patches of common. Nothing can well be imagined more beautiful than this little bit of ground is now. Huge masses of lupines (say fifty or sixty spiral spikes), some white, some lilac; immense clumps of the enamelled Siberian larkspur, glittering like some enormous Chinese jar; the white and azure blossoms of the variegated monkshood; flags of all colours; roses of every shade, some covering the house and stables and overtopping the roofs, others mingling with tall apple trees, others again (especially the beautiful double Scotch rose) low but broad, standing in bright relief to the blues and purples; and the oriental poppy, like an orange lamp (for it really seems to have light within it) shining amidst the deeper greens; above all, the pyramid of geraniums, beautiful beyond all beauty, rising in front of our garden room, whilst each corner is filled with the same beautiful flower, and the whole air perfumed by the delicious honeysuckle. Nothing can be more lovely.

[*The rest is wanting.*]

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, June 25, 1842.

I wonder, my very dearest, when I shall be quiet again! Last Monday I set forth to get a flower of the buck-bean. I had set my heart upon it. Whole beds of that rare plant grow upon either side of a stream that runs amongst Mr. Tyshe Palmer's plantations, crossed by two bridges, called Kingsbridge and Queensbridge, on two roads which diverge so (, about four miles from the little town of Wokingham. Now, Wokingham is eight miles from us; but, by crossing the heath, we save about two, at the expense of walking those two miles under the firs—a delicious walk in these

balmy summer evenings, when the scent is as of Arabia. Well, I had been three times to this Kingsbridge in chase of this flower—twice quite in vain; but the third time we had found the plant, its buds and leaves in profusion, so that I was determined not to give up the flower. Accordingly, Ben being busy finishing the hay, Marianne (my hysterical maid), and I, set forth, with the pony and Flush for all our company. The road is exquisite—by Arborfield first, and through delicious lanes walled with honeysuckle-hedges, and cradled above with beech and oak and elm—over the Lodden, with its floating water-lilies—then through the still wilder lanes and woodlands of Barkham, until we reached the heath, pink and purple with the flowers from which it takes its name—and then Mr. Tyshe Palmer's exquisite plantations of fir, and larch, and beech, and mountain ash.

The name of the road we took will tell you the extent of these plantations—"The Nine Mile Ride;" but of their beauty, diversified by little valleys with wandering brooks, and varied by the most sudden rise and fall of the ground, by bits of wild road hollowed out of the hill-side, and overgrown by shaggy precipices, and of the exquisite odours of the pines and the heath-flowers of a thousand sorts, I can give you no notion. For the last two miles we had to lead the pony, because this Nine Mile Ride may be a ride, but is no road for a wheeled vehicle. That we did not mind. We did, however, begin to fret when, on reaching the streamlet where the buck-bean grew, and traversing it on either side for above an hour, we found thousands, millions of plants, but not one blossom—most carefully had they been cut off! Ben says "mowed"; I rather think cut by people employed by the London druggists, it being a celebrated remedy for erysipelas. However that may

be, gone it was, and we had no other consolation than that of finding in profusion the equally rare bog asphodel. Do you know *that* pretty wild flower? Wet high above our boots (for we had traversed miles of bog), we prepared to set off on our way home, when a tremendous roll of thunder over our heads gave token of what was about to ensue. The pony curvetted; Flush was uneasy; hail and rain poured down in torrents—hail such as in my life I never saw; in fact, it broke all the glass it came near. In fewer minutes than I care to say we were wet to the skin; the bottom of the pony-chaise was as full of water as a bucket, and the pony was so frightened, it was clear that the best we could do was to lead it home. This we did, not meeting a creature till we got to Arborfield, by which time we had made up our minds to follow out the adventure. At first we were violently angry to be so deserted, and said to one another, rather oftener than was quite magnanimous, "Well, if K—— had been out in this rain, we should have sent after *her!* Thank Heaven, we never deserted anybody in such a manner!" But by the time we had passed Barkham we began to perceive by the state of the roads how completely local the storm had been; in fact we were, I really believe, completely in the centre both of the lightning and the hail and rain.

Never was such a plight as ours. It has spoilt my two cloaks (one a fur one—a real loss), which had been hung over the back of the chaise, and which we abandoned, as adding to the weight of water which we had to carry; but beyond this misfortune, which I shall feel severely in the winter (I must try to buy one second-hand), we escaped wonderfully. I suppose we should have been very stiff the next day if we had had time; but on Tuesday that gander feast, the Reading Whist Club,

dined with us; and then, between helping to cook, and talking and waiting upon the good folks, we got the stiffness rubbed out of our bones in a wonderful manner.

Ever your own,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, July 23, 1842.

Yes, my dearest, my mother's fortune was large, my father's good, legacies from both sides, a twenty thousand pound prize in the lottery—all have vanished. My uncle's estates, his wife's, his father's and mother's (a fine old place called Old Wall, in Westmoreland; she—my grandmother—was a Graham 'of the Netherby clan')—all have disappeared; so that I, the only child amongst six or seven good fortunes (for my mother—herself an only child—inherited an even splendid inheritance), have been, during the better part of my life, struggling with actual difficulty; and, if I should live long enough, shall probably die in a workhouse—content so to die if preserved from the far bitterer misery of seeing my dear, dear father want his accustomed comforts;—content, ay happy, if that far deeper wretchedness be spared.

The leaving the dear old house was a grief—would have been a greater had not this cottage stood ready to receive us, so that my strong local predilections were indulged, and I soon came to love our pretty garden better than the grounds that I left. I could not, I think, so quietly have borne the change to a town. And yet I don't know; there is a blessed principle of conformity in human nature, and I should have fallen into the artist-society of London, where clever and cultivated men and intelligent women, after a day spent in their

various pursuits, meet at night—or rather *did* meet at night, for I question if even that society be not spoilt by the all-pervading finery and pretension which desecrates all classes—but where they did meet at night, without fuss or ceremony, or dress or regale of any sort —calling in quietly, without preparation, at each other's houses between seven and eight o'clock, and staying till ten, or going, with equal disregard of appearance, to the theatre; for, trust me, to have seen John Kemble and his sister in 'Macbeth,' and Kean in 'Othello,' and Cooke in 'Sir Pertinax,' and Miss O'Neil in 'Juliet,' are things never to forget. Such a life might have had its enjoyments even in London, though I doubt if now I could get through the spring and summer out of reach of fields and woods. Trees and fresh air are necessities to my constitution.

Miss Martineau is a person of great singleness of mind, sincere and truthful; but I have always thought that she did not very well know her own mind. She is so one-sided that I never should be astonished to find her turn short round and change her opinions plump. And this, I suppose, must have been the case here, for really it does not seem possible that the two books* could have been written by the same person, unless upon such a theory. How much damage the two parties, high and low, are doing to the Church by these contests! In the midst of them, freedom of conscience and true religion will probably take deep root; but it is grievous to see the holiest names profaned to the uses of the basest passions.

You are right, dearest, about Dryden, quite; and about Johnson, whom I should like to have seen. I

* 'The Crofton Boys' and 'Principle and Practice.'

had a fancy that Parr resembled him in manner till I saw him, or rather till I heard him, and then—what a disappointment! I dined in company with him at Mr. Perry's, the then proprietor and editor of the 'Morning Chronicle,' who, as Porson's brother-in-law, and a man of admirable sense and wit, had a no profound veneration for the buzzwig doctor. He was a little, insignificant man, peculiar in dress, with a low insignificant voice, and a lisp that totally took away all the oracular effect of his sayings. Not one word did he say that day that anybody could have cared to remember. He brought three persons with him; one, in whose house he was staying; another, in whose carriage they both came; and a third, a *protégé*, whom he wished to introduce to some great people invited to meet him: none of the three being invited or expected until they made their appearance. One of these (Basil Montague) said a very good thing. Talking of the Doctor's illegible MS., "Ay," said he, "his letters are illegible, except they contain a commission or an announcement that he is coming to see you, and then no man can write plainer."

There was nothing of this sort about Porson. I did not know him, but his brother-in-law and his stepdaughter, my intimate friends, spoke of him as a noble nature unhappily wasted—as a kind, careless, generous, open-hearted creature, to be pitied and mourned, much as one thinks of Burns. I hope to inclose Dryden's letter.

Now, good-night, my precious love! I have been interrupted by my dear father's cramp, but that seems now gone, so I am going to bed myself. God bless you, my own dear friend!

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, July 25, 1842.

I have had two or three interesting visits lately, dearest. One, the last (to-day), from a Dr. Carter, a friend of Dr. Elliotson, and a believer in, if not a practiser of, animal magnetism. He has travelled all through America, North and South, visiting Chili and Mexico, doubling Cape Horn, rambling over Juan Fernandez, &c., &c. He says that, allowing for a little colouring, Stephens's 'Central America' comes very near the truth; prefers South America to North; but declares that, after rambling over all that is fairest in Europe, Greece, Italy, the Peninsula, the lovely islands of the Pacific, all that is called finest in point of scenery, he knows nothing so beautiful, for mere beauty, as our own dear England. The Americas are on too large a scale, he says; neither the eye nor the mind can take in a whole. I can understand this. And the result of their too bright skies is a want of atmospheric illusion—of shifting shadow—of that transition which is as expression to a lovely face.

I wish you had seen Dr. Carter, you would have been pleased with him. He told me what I did not before know, that Mrs. Trollope is a thorough-going mesmerite, constantly at Dr. Elliotson's, and believing through thick and thin. Another thing which he told me gratified me greatly: being ill in Spain, home-sick and longing for some English or English-like book, he sent to see if such a treat could be procured, and received a Spanish translation of 'Our Village!' So few English works are published in a Spanish dress that it is a real compliment, and I tell you of it just as I told my father, because I know that it will please your dear heart.

Another visitor is Lord Brougham's thrice-charming and thrice-excellent sister. She is full of life, and spirit, and brilliancy—as clever, Marianne says, as her brother, and kind, cordial, generous, frank, and full of all that is admirable and all that is charming. We have only spent one afternoon together, and I feel that we are friends for life. She says that her brother's health and spirits are better than she once feared they would be. He finds in constant employment a medicine for great grief—the loss of his mother weighing even more heavily than the loss of his daughter. Both were to be expected, but Miss Brougham said that she believed her brother had reconciled himself to the one as inevitable—had even assigned to it (through the foresight of the medical men) something very near the actual date; whilst the green old age of his mother, the absence of change or decay either of health, spirits, or faculty, had blinded him to the danger, so that the shock, the surprise, was greater in the death of the very old than of the very young.

He has lost one eye, and the other fails him, so that he dictates instead of writing. His newspaper is the 'Sun.' He has never had the courage to revisit Brougham since his mother's death, and Miss B. says she doubts if he ever will. His place in the south of France is his great amusement; and the giving judgments in the House of Peers. How I wished for you during Miss Brougham's visit! God bless them both!

Ever your own,

M. R. M.

To Miss Barrett.

Three Mile Cross, August 18, 1842.

What you say of Milton is full of truth. But *one* truth you have, I think, not perceived, that the want

of distinctive character causes much of the heaviness, of character, individuality, the power of identification, which is the salt of all literature from Horace to Scott. It is the one great merit of your own Chaucer, the glory of Shakespeare, the one grand quality by which writers worthy to live will live to all time, and without which they may indeed exist, praised, but unread, amongst moths and cobwebs.

Heaven bless you, my beloved friend!

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Sept 2, 1842.

You may imagine, my beloved friend, how very much my dear father is restored when I tell you that carrying with us, and sending on before, the four persons absolutely necessary to help him in and out of his very low open carriage, he was well enough to attend at the stone-laying ceremony yesterday * (Wednesday), and that the exertion, as Mr. May foretold, rather did him good than harm. It was really a pretty ceremony. I suppose there'll be an account of it in the Reading paper next week; if so, I'll send it. Perhaps, after reading, you will be so good as to return it, since I should like to keep the detail. If ever I am ungrateful enough to bemoan my isolated position, I ought to think over the assemblage in the morning, and at the evening tea-party and concert (where my father insisted on my appearing for an hour), in order to feel the thankfulness that thrilled through my very heart at the true and honest kindness with which I was received. It was an enthusiasm of man, woman, and child—hundreds—

* The first stone of the Reading reading-room.

thousands—such as I can hardly venture to describe, and it lasted all the time I stayed. Indeed, the pleasure amounted to pain, so confusing was it to hear the over-praise of which I felt myself unworthy. But it was not the praise that was so touching, it was the kindliness, the affection. My father cried, K—— cried, Dora Smith cried, I think more than all, at the true, honest, generous heartiness of the people. There is in Reading a very eloquent man, really eloquent, and it is a high and rare gift. He is a physician, young and deeply religious, very clever, very scientific, and one who interests himself greatly in the instruction of the people, giving courses of lectures every winter. He spoke the oration, a very fine one; and if the reporter have done him justice, you will see that he is a speaker of no common stamp. If the account be badly done, I shan't send it; but will then write again to supply the omissions of this letter; taking for granted frankly, my most dearest, that to you it will be as full of interest as such a thing happening to you would be to me. Think how full of thanksgiving were my prayers last night that my dear father had enjoyed such gratification.

I must see the 'North American Review,' and the condemned tragedies, chiefly the 'North American.' I know very well Mrs. Stirling, the mother of the poet. His father is the most trenchant and violent writer of the 'Times.' Mrs. Stirling is very charming—a Cornelia-like woman—stately and noble, whose pride in her son is charming. It is long since I have seen her. No, Mr. Milnes is not cold! I love his poetry.

Heaven bless you, my love! I am tired to death.

Ever your own,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Sept. 9, 1842.

I have to-day a letter from Marianne Skerrett. She says the Queen's procession, nine carriages and four, Life Guards and Highlanders, winding along those woody mountains and by the side of the lakes—every nook and corner and turfy hillside covered with crowds of people—was beautiful beyond all beauty. She speaks well of the three duchesses, particularly of the Duchess of Norfolk, a woman, she says, of wonderful reading and knowledge, and great kindness. Lady Willoughby d'Eresby, chief of the Clan Drummond, through her father the Earl of Perth, is also, she says, a very charming woman. She wore at dinner, in compliment to the Queen, the chieftain's bonnet with two eagle's feathers.

My nearest relation, except my dear father, *his* first cousin and my namesake, Mary Mitford—a little, active, buoyant, cheerful, good-humoured old maid—who is on a visit to the Duchess of Athole, told me that among the preparations to receive her Majesty were thirty tents on the lawn at Dunkeld for a thousand kilted Highlanders in Murray tartan; whilst in a splendid tent for the Queen and her party is to be laid out a sumptuous luncheon, which Gunter and his people were to come from London to prepare! Is not this a very amusing conjunction of names and things?—a singular union of the old times and the new?

The Queen does not mean to visit the places which would interest me—those which Scott and Burns have commemorated. Heaven bless you!

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Nov. 20, 1842.

No, my precious! do not send anything else *yet*: perhaps, by-and-by, a few oysters, but not for this week, Mrs. Cockburn having sent a brace of grouse. Did I tell you that my father took last night with Mr. Cox three glasses of claret, and afterwards two glasses more; enjoying them, not taking them, as he does the gravy, medicinally; but feeling the pleasure, the strange pleasure, that gentlemen do feel in the scent and taste of fine wine, especially when shared with a friend. Surely this is a sign of amendment! And he called me again "my treasure;" always his favourite word for his poor daughter. It rejoices my heart. Of course the previous omission was accidental. I feel sure now that he was not angry; but before, I had *so* feared it; and it had *so* grieved me—grieved me to the very bottom of my heart. So that, if it had pleased God to take him *then*, I do believe that I should have died of very grief. I thought that I must have said something, or done something, or left something unsaid or undone, that had displeased him. *Now*, so far as that goes, my heart is at ease, and it is the taking off of a great load.

Love to your dear people.

Ever your own,

M. R. M.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, Nov. 1842.

My dear father continues much as when I wrote last. For two days he has been composed and collected, so as to derive much comfort from the clergyman of the parish, and from my reading to him and praying with

him—as, indeed, I have done for many months—ever since he was unable to read the Bible himself. He prefers St. John's gospel; so do I. There is more tenderness, I think, in the beloved disciple. But all are full of comfort.

Heaven bless you, my beloved friend! I will write you a longer letter when I have more time and steadier fingers.

Ever yours,
M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Dec. 1, 1842.

On Saturday, my beloved, I had again the bitter, bitter fear of my dear father's immediate death. Every symptom was alarming. So it was on Sunday morning; and by Sunday evening, finding that Mr. May did not arrive, I determined to go to Reading to see our dear friend, and find from him whether I should not discontinue the medicine which seemed to affect him, and whether he could not substitute some other for it. Having waited for Mr. May at home till half-past five, it was, when we started, dark and rainy. When we got to his house he was not at home, but was expected in half an hour. So I waited for him that and another half-hour; and at last, finding that the chance of his return rather diminished than increased, I took the advice of his partner, to persist in the brandy and water and discontinue the medicine, and with his promise that Mr. May should see us early on Monday set off on my return home about seven o'clock. After we left the Reading lights we found the darkness tremendous. The very hedges of the highroad were invisible; but Ben assured me that "the pony could see in the dark;"

that there was no danger; and that we should be back in a quarter of an hour—his usual time for performing the journey. Well, it rained drivingly, so that I held an umbrella over the side next the outside of the gig—the side that was not Ben's; and when we had reached a hill half-way between Reading and the Cross—"just on the pitch of the hill," to use Ben's phrase—two men rushed from the path by the roadside, on my side, the left, and one caught hold of the pony's rein, and the other clutched at my umbrella—failing to catch it, but driving it against me in the effort. Not a word was spoken; but we felt the jar both of the rein and of the umbrella, Ben of one and I of the other, and heard the sharp heavy sound of a bludgeon striking against the shaft, which, luckily, as we imagine, also hit the pony. He darted on like the wind; threw off the man, who had caught the rein, and who, stricken either by the shaft or the step, was knocked under the wheel. The sudden shock disengaging us also from the man who was still trying to grasp the umbrella—and who had actually seized hold of the back of the chaise—we were in an instant flying along the road at full gallop, and free. The plunging of the chaise, as we passed over the foot-pad was tremendous; and it is wonderful that I was not thrown out by the jolt. The sensation of being, as we literally were, run away with for nearly two miles in a darkness which might almost be felt, was anything but pleasant. Ben had no earthly power over the pony; but by the mercy of Providence, we did not meet any carriage of any sort, and the dear, dear pony slackened his pace as soon as he saw the lights of our little street, and drove quietly up to our own door.

Was not this a sad trial to nerves already so shaken? I am most thankful for my escape; but it was a great

trial, and will go far to hinder me from ever walking at night. I am writing on Tuesday, and have *not* had a letter to-day. Good-bye.

Ever faithfully your own,

M. R. M.

To Miss Barrett.

Three Mile Cross, Dec. 5, 1842.

It is great presumption to differ from you, my dearest; but we love one another all the better, I think, for the truth, with which each tells the impression made by books and people; and for the differences as well as the similarities of our taste. Some day or other I shall certainly read these books; but I doubt if I shall be much smitten by works so extravagant. It seems to me that the real test of power is to produce great effects by seemingly small and ordinary means—by truth, not by excess. Moreover, I delight in the bright and the cheerful. Next to Molière, the French dramatist that I like best is Beaumarchais, whose *two* plays, 'Le Barbier' and 'Le Mariage,' seem to me amongst the most delightful pieces of gaiety ever dreamt by poet. Now, these new people have no notion of chiaroscuro. They are all oscuro—dark, dark shade, with as little light as may be, and that little moonlight—not the bright beams of the sun. No! there is no danger of my being ever smitten by these sorts of naughtinesses. And yet I shall most assuredly read them, as soon as I can without dishonesty; because, as you do *not* say, my dearest, there is no sending me Saunders & Otley's books. The time will come when you shall make me a list of the best. Surely the one you last mention cannot be amongst them?

Do me the justice to believe that my real feeling

is one of intense thankfulness, that what I have has lasted so as to furnish to my dear father all that he has wanted; that for the last twenty years he has known no want in this poor cottage. What I earned and what I had has been enough. It was before. In the terrible embarrassment of falling circumstances:—first, in the struggle after appearances, with a great establishment in a fine place; then with that long law-suit and the up-hill striving in literature and the drama (always a series of expectations unfulfilled, and blighted hopes, and sharp, sudden, cutting disappointments); and more or less even during these last twenty years—although want, actual want, has not come, yet fear and anxiety have never been absent.

I may truly say that ever since I was a very young girl I have never, although for some years living apparently in affluence, been without pecuniary care—a care that pressed upon my thoughts the last thing at night, and woke in the morning with a dreary, heavy sense of pain and pressure of something which weighed me to the earth—which I would fain cast off, but could not. Oh, my dear friend! be sure that poverty is indeed a most real and clinging evil. Here, I think, is one reason of the difference of taste between us—I like the sunny and the bright, because my own thoughts are full of sadness, and I require the change. You know what Coleridge says of Genévieve,

"Few sorrows had she of her own."

Now I have always had many, and therefore I love things that make me gay—therefore, amongst other reasons, I love Miss Austen. I shall be sure to read the Swedish book, and sure to like it; but Mary Howitt's English will be one take-off; and is there not

some strange morbid tale woven in with it, for another? Oh! if it were indeed Miss Austen, that would be discovering a mine of diamonds.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Dec. 11, 1842.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

All is over—my dear, dear father breathed his last at six o'clock this morning, without a struggle or a sigh. He had been speechless for many hours. All that you say is right, my beloved friend; and I will try to bear up as you would have me—I will, indeed. I am not ill, except from shiverings, which come across me whether up or in bed. But they are merely nervous, Mr. May says, and will subside after a little while. It is selfish to wish him alive again, unless he could be well as he used to be. I must pray for submission. I am so sure of his happiness! So would you be if you could see him. Mr. Harrison, Mr. May's partner, has written to request permission to take a cast of his face. It is full of heavenly calm; and, if Mr. Harrison succeeds, I shall be most thankful to possess such a memorial. A friend and neighbour is coming this afternoon for a few hours, and I expect George Dawson to-morrow. So that I am well seen to. Heaven bless you, my beloved friend! Thank you for all your goodness.

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Dec. 12, 1842.

All friends are kind and very soothing, but not half so soothing as your sweet kindness, my dearest. Oh! let me think of you as a most dear friend—almost a daughter, for such you have been to me.

I'll let you know when the French books arrive. You should not have done it, my sweetest—I would have contrived to see them some way or other. In the meanwhile, even in all my affliction, Tennyson has had a power over my imagination which I could not have believed possible. You love the great and the deep—I, the bright and the beautiful, and therefore, each loving those delicious poems, we prefer the different ones, according to our several fancies. I thought so as I read them.

Everybody is so kind! The principal farmers are striving who shall carry the coffin. Surely this is not common—to an impoverished man—one long impoverished—one whose successor is utterly powerless! This is disinterested, if ever anything were so, and therefore very touching, very dear. Perhaps I have shed more tears for the gratitude caused by this kindness and other kindnesses than for the great, great grief! That seems to lock up the fountain; this to unseal it. Bless you, my beloved, for all your inimitable kindness! Oh! how he loved to bless you! He seldom spoke the dear name without the benediction—"Miss Barrett! dear Miss Barrett! Heaven bless her!" How often has he said that! I seem to love the name the better for that recollection. And now, my most beloved friend, good-night! Let me say how very, very kind everybody is! I think, I am sure, that you will like to hear that.

God bless you, my precious friend! I am resigned—indeed I am. I know that it is right; and that is His will. Heaven bless you, my very dearest—my best comforter!

Ever your own,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Dec. 15, 1842.

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your dear, precious letter. You would be astonished at my composure—*I* am. I have scarcely shed a tear since Saturday. And I woo cheerful thoughts, and take all care of myself, as *he* would have wished. If ever spirit were in heaven, *there*, through the mercy of God, and the atonement of the Saviour, is he—whose faith and trust were in that mercy and that atonement—whose last moments were peace—whose every thought was of kindness to man and trust in heavenly mercy through the mediation of the Redeemer. And so, feeling, and knowing that to have kept him here, even if that had been possible, would have been to detain him amongst care and sorrow, in feebleness, helplessness, and suffering —it would indeed be a wicked selfishness, not to strive, with all my strength, for resignation and for cheerfulness.

It would be a base ingratitude to you, too, my beloved friend, and to the many, many kind and affectionate people who are around me. I cannot tell you how good and kind everybody is. It seems as if they were inspired with your spirit. Those whom he best loved will follow him. I have just strewn flowers over him (the lovely chrysanthemums that he loved so well, that he helped me to strew over my dear mother), and he looks with a heavenly composure, and almost with his own beautiful colour, the exquisite vermilion for which he was so famous, on his sweet, serene countenance. I could not touch him. Mr. May desired me not. He said there was danger in renewing the chill, which has now passed away. I mean the shiverings. So that I am greatly better, my beloved friend, and when I get

into the air again shall do well. Still, I am alone; that is the thought that clings to me, though when I think of you, sister of my heart, it presses less heavily.

I read Tennyson. 'Locksley Hall' is very fine; but should it not have finished at

"I myself must mix with action,
Lest I wither by despair"?

It seems to me that all after that weakens the impression of the story, which has its appropriate finish with that line. What do we not owe to such a poet? One, who can be thought of at such a time!

I must limit my correspondence. I have written above a hundred letters; and now feel that some, who had real claims, have been forgotten. Heaven bless you, my beloved friend!

Ever faithfully yours,
M. R. M.

[Dr. Mitford died considerably in debt, and Miss Mitford, writing at this time, observes: "Everybody shall be paid, if I sell the gown off my back or pledge my little pension." At the suggestion of friends a subscription was raised to meet these liabilities.]

CHAPTER X.

Letters for 1843 and 1844.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, March 16, 1843.

I take my chance, dearest Emily, of not having written to tell you how favourably the subscription goes on (for such is the number of letters that I have to answer every day that I really cannot tell), being sure that you would rather receive two letters on this subject than none. I have not been at the bank since last Saturday, but then the money received had been near a thousand pounds, and I knew of some hundreds more, and the very next post brought news of seventy-five pounds additional. Among the subscribers are the Queen, who desires her name *not* to be mentioned, as she gives from her private income, and fears being subjected to solicitation (this adds to the compliment, as it proves it is not a matter of form); the Queen Dowager, the Archbishop of Dublin, his brother Mr. Whately (is he a clergyman?), the Bishop of Durham, the Dukes of Bedford and Devonshire, the Duchess of Norfolk, the Marquises of Lansdowne and Northampton, Earls Fitzwilliam, Spencer, and Radnor, Viscount Sidmouth, Lord Redesdale, Lady Byron, Lady Dacre, Joanna Baillie, Maria Edgeworth, Mrs. Trollope, Mrs. Opie, Mr. Moore, Mr. Rogers, Mr. Horace Smith,

Mr. Morier, and many other persons of station, talent, and character. Nothing can exceed their cordiality and delicacy, so that their benefactions are given as a compliment.

I half think that I *have* written all this to you, my dear love. If so, forgive it. I have been very poorly, but am now better, except that having walked with a view of walking the sickness off, I have rendered myself quite lame. I hope to get well soon in order to go to Bath next month, and return home *viâ* Devonshire.

Heaven bless you, my dear friend!

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To the Rev. William Harness, *London.*

Three Mile Cross, April 4, 1843.

My dear Friend,

How troublesome I am to you, and how kind you are to me! We shall have time enough to think over the question of residence when we see to what my little income may amount. But it does not seem to me as if I could ever live in any town; and I doubt whether a small cottage in the country be not cheaper than lodgings. A friend of mine has such a cottage adjoining his own house at Caversham, two miles north of Reading. He built it for his wife's father, who is now dead, and has since let every year for three months. He offers it to me on the same condition, that is to say, to let it for three months in the summer, which will clear every expense; so that I shall live there for nine months in the year rent free, with the additional comfort of most kind, good, agreeable people close by, and the privilege of having letters, &c., brought by their servants, and a general feeling of protection from living

almost under the same roof with a man of honour and of intelligence. You won't think the worse of him for being in business in Reading. You will be glad to hear that my subscription proceeds well: a thousand pounds, or very nearly so, have been received at the different banks, and I know of some hundreds more; so that the debts are, I bless God, paid in full. But still my health is so bad, and my poverty so great, that my friends hope there may be sufficient for the purchase of a small annuity—and this is what they are now trying for. I never before had an idea of my own popularity; and I have on two or three occasions shed tears of pure thankfulness at reading the letters which have been written to, or about, me—from Archbishop Whately and men of his class. I only pray to God that I may deserve half that has been said of me. So far as the truest and humblest thankfulness may merit such kindness, I am perhaps, not wholly undeserving, for praise always makes me humble. I always feel that I am over-valued; and such is, I suppose, its effect on every mind not exceedingly vain-glorious.

Yours most sincerely,

M. R. M.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, April —, 1843.

This has been a very fortunate day to my heart. First came your sweet letter, with its promise to come and see me; then came a dear letter from Miss Barrett, more cheerful and healthy than any I have received for a very long time; then a packet sent by order of the Archbishop of Dublin, containing a charming story, called 'Reverses,' for young people, his father's essay on Shakespeare (I take it for granted it is his father's),

and an edition, revised and partly rewritten, of the 'Tales of the Genii.' I am delighted at this sort of intercourse. Of all the Church of England I know none whom I so much admire as Archbishop Whately, and *this* present from *him* has enchanted me.

What will become of me just now I can't tell. Mr. Blandy wants to get this cottage put into the best possible order and lowered in rent, and then that I should remain here. But this will be settled soon: at all events I shall, I hope and believe, continue in my own dear village. The other house would take me from much that is interesting in association and beautiful in home scenery: the bay tree, for instance, and the honeysuckles, and rose trees, and lilies of the valley of this garden, as well as the pretty garden-room. On the whole, taking into consideration the expense and trouble of moving, I might really lose by it; and though Ben sometimes says that I *may* live six or eight years, yet I feel very strongly the uncertainty of my life. I have suffered much this spring from headache and sickness: all existence partakes that form, whether painful or pleasurable. You seem, my beloved friend, to think of throwing your visit backwards in the summer: that I should like. The time that I should prefer would be the season of geraniums and strawberries, when half the county used to assemble to parties of strawberries and cream in the greenhouse. Perhaps we may still be able to manage that: you would like the scene and some of the people here.

Have I told you that Wordsworth wrote an interesting letter to Mr. Crabb Robinson on the death of Southey? He said that, in spite of the curtain that had dropped between him and the world, he had felt most acutely the death of the friend of his youth. This for Words-

worth, so cold in manner, is much. For men so united in pursuits and tastes, and only twenty or thirty miles apart, they saw little of each other; and that may perhaps be a reason for Wordsworth's feeling the total separation the more. Southey died of typhus fever, having had some weeks ago an apoplectic fit, so that he suffered many forms of death before the great change. It is the extinction of a great light, perhaps, prose and poetry considered, and the extent and variety of his learning—the greatest since Scott.

You are right, dearest, about not meeting me at Bath. I shall only stay a week, and nothing can be so uncertain as the time when I may go. I have not heard any particulars of the subscription lately, but it certainly exceeds fifteen hundred pounds. I am most thankful for the amount, and still more so for the kindness. Heaven bless you!

Ever most faithfully and affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, May —, 1843.

The accompanying note, my beloved friend, has been waiting till I could send you a definitive sketch of my plans. *Now*, a complete change has taken place. Mr. Blandy has persuaded *me* to stay, and the agent (receiver) of the Court of Chancery to lower the rent and assist in repairing, painting, and papering this cottage, so that *here* is to be my home—here in my old abode. But as Mr. May declares that paint would be to me just as fatal as prussic acid, I am going to Bath to-morrow, from thence to Devonshire, North and South, not to return till all smell is gone. Mr. May says that the journey is necessary—that I should otherwise fall

into hopeless ill-health; but that, with the journey and care, I should do well. At present I am very poorly, and look upon moving with such dread that, but for being driven out by the paint, I don't think I could muster courage for to-morrow's journey.

Ever yours most affectionately,

M. R. M.

To Miss Jephson, *Ireland.*

Bath, May —, 1843.

First, dearest Emily, let me thank you, and beg you to thank Mrs. and Miss Edgeworth repeatedly for their great kindness. I have been at Bath for a fortnight, but have never been able to see the pictures you were so good as to offer me the sight of—never able to get to them—and but for Mr. Reade and Mr. Musgrove, should actually leave the neighbourhood without seeing Mr. Beckford's house and tower. The greatest pleasure that I have enjoyed has been last Sunday and this, both of which have been spent at Prior Park. I do not know when I have been so thoroughly interested as by Bishop Baines and his secretary, Mr. Bonomi, the old priest and the young. The Bishop is the very incarnation of taste, combined with an intelligence, a liberality, a gracious indulgence most rare among Protestant clergymen, who, frequently excellent, are seldom charming; while the younger one is full of sweetness and purity. My maid K—— is much afraid of my turning Catholic, and I have been really amused to-night at her fears. But one may love the good of every faith, and put the Catholic Bishop by the side of the Protestant Archbishop with no injury to any person, least of all to oneself. On Thursday I went to Clifton, and prefer Bristol to Bath for its colour and its variety of street architecture, which, I

suppose, is a great heresy. But this place, besides that it has rained more or less every day since my arrival, is too cold to please me, and seems like a city of the dead —from the absence of horsemen and horsewomen, and the little open carriages which swarm in our roads like motes in the sunbeam. There is much beauty, nevertheless, in the old town—that *one* side of Queen Square especially—and the environs are lovely; but trees are wanting—real fine trees—and water—real brimming rivers like the Lodden, the Kennett, and the Thames. Nevertheless, there is much beauty, and I have walked over a great deal of it. The man who showed me over Bristol the other day (a man from the railway) says that I walked twelve miles. K—— never stirred for two days. I took a long walk the next, but I can't sleep, and sickness and headache come as surely as heat, so that the sooner I get out of Bath the better. Clifton is lovely. I wish you were here to walk over it with me.

Ever yours, dearest Emily,

M. R. M.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross,
Tuesday, June —, 1843.

Here I am, dearest Emily, to the great astonishment of everybody, and not a little to my own. Last Wednesday, at half-past four, I went down to the Bristol station to go on to Barnstaple, but I found the travelling in Devonshire at this season so difficult for women; the weather so bad, and myself so poorly (I had had one of my fits of sickness the night before); that I followed the example of a fly-full of women whom I met at the station—drove over the way—and, instead of embarking in the down train, took a passage in the up. This has turned out lucky

for my affairs at home, for I found them dawdling over every room, never having had above one workman at a time in the house; and a little ungrateful jade, whom I kept only till I could get her a place, having gone out every night, and being actually at the play when I came home; so that now things will proceed better, and I shall probably (if my book be done, or likely to be done) finish my tour in August, or somewhere thereabout. I am delighted with my journey, places, and people, though Bath is a disappointment—cold, monotonous, bald, poor, and dead; and Clifton leaves all the beauty behind at the Hotwells. But, then, what a scene *that* is! and what a glorious old city is Bristol! and how lovely past all loveliness is Prior Park! But Bath leaves few and faint impressions. Bristol, on the other hand, is warm, glowing, picturesque. At Bath I was forced to follow about shadows—Miss Austen, Anne Elliott, and Catherine Morland; at Bristol I trod in the footsteps of Coleridge, Southey, Chatterton. One afternoon I spent with Mr. Cottle, among his interesting letters and portraits. Twice I went over the Redcliffe church, twice over the Mayor's chapel, the cathedral, and the great iron ship.

If I can get my house to rights, and finish my book by August (which I doubt), it will remain much according to your will whether I stay here with you or go on into Devonshire. At present I have Ben's mother's bedroom, in a cottage at three pounds a year—a real labourer's cottage. I have no grate, but have to build up my fire between two bricks, with an old poker laid across the front for a bar. The way to it is by a roundabout stair, as steep and dark as that into the muniment chamber above the porch in Redcliffe church; but it is airy,

sweet, and clean. It is such a comfort to have found dear little Flush and Ben so glad to see us again. Ben turned everybody out of bed, rummaged out the sheets, aired them, carried my bed down to his mother's room through the dark and rain, stuffed two pillows into a case to make one hard one, as he knew I liked; got my cocoa out of the trunk, boiled it; ran over the place for brown bread, toasted that; got a kettleful of boiling water, which he knew was wanted for something; tossed over the carpet bag till he came to the night things, and warmed them: finding time, between all and every of these womanish jobs, to talk all sorts of manly and womanly gossip. God bless him, poor boy! It is worth much to be *so* welcomed. I had dreaded the coming back alone to a lonely home, but Ben and Flush, and the bustle altogether, and the scolding which I found it my duty to administer, quite took the edge off my sadness. You must come to me, dearest Emily. I hope I shall be able to get the book, which at present is my Old Man of the Sea, off my shoulders. My cottage will be very clean and simple, and like any other poor labourer's cottage, and the garden will be pretty.

Adieu, my very dear friend. I send you a long exposition of crotchets past and present.

Ever yours,
M. R. M.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, July 7, 1843.

Thanks upon thanks, my very dear Emily, for your most kind and welcome letter. No! Lismore will not do. I cannot *wait* in the matter of books. I have been too much spoiled. At this moment I have eight sets of books belonging to Mr. Lovejoy. I have every

periodical within a week, and generally cut open every interesting new publication—getting them literally the day before publication. Guess if that would do for patient waiting, either in Ireland or Devonshire! From all that I can hear, the flowers that live in those places flourish in Jersey. St. Heliers is a town better than Reading; the libraries, French and English, are excellent; the houses a mile or two from the town (and I should prefer that) not dearer than here; the country of exquisite beauty, combining delicious wooded valleys and bold coast scenery; and the society good. It is the combination of these things with one other that attracts me—I mean the opportunity of regaining French, so that I might take a look at Paris, Rouen, &c., &c. I read it just like English, but have so lost the habit of talking it that I should hesitate at going abroad. Now, in Jersey I could practise in shops and markets; and with a home, English in every respect of comfort, &c., &c., I could leave it for a few weeks in Paris, without much trouble. But I shall not decide on this till the summer.

Absentees, or clergy without congregations, will doubtless eventually disappear from Ireland. They ought to do so. But still there will doubtless be left an effective clergy of the Church of England persuasion; though I confess I should like to see churches for the Catholics also. I do not say clergy, for a zealous and devoted priesthood they have. There ought to be a provision for both—for all. But I suppose the Catholics would not accept a stipend now. Well, I have a faith in all righting itself, and that fine people becoming eventually as tranquil and as prosperous as the English. What a magnificent speech Mr. Sheil's was! I hope Daniel O'Connell will not be

imprisoned. He is too old for the punishment; and to make a martyr of him is no way to lessen his influence. I have a strong feeling towards Ireland, as my having thought of going there proves; though the vicinity of Lismore to Castle Martyr was one great reason for my desire. But the want of books is final: I could far better do without society, provided I had a friend near. If I were to live at Bath, I should have to get books from Reading. They are so ill supplied, and we so well.

Poor dear Bishop Baines! Never was I more affected. He had consecrated the Bristol Chapel; preached a long sermon; entertained a party to dinner at Prior Park: and was found dead in his bed the next morning, having been warned against the exertion. Five friends wrote to acquaint me of the sad event. He was a great and a good man. Have you read 'Jack Hinton?' if not, do; it's charming. Also a most delightful novel called 'The Old English Gentleman.'

Heaven bless you, dearest Emily!

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

All our annuals failed this year. If you could save me some seeds it would be a great favour.

1844.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Feb. 28, 1844.

[*The greater part of the following letter is missing.*]

Charles Kingsley spoke during two hours and twenty minutes—with such earnestness! such conviction! such passion! such beauty! There is nothing like real high eloquence. It is poetry living and breathing, and

carrying you on like a torrent, in its magnificent course. Oh, how I longed for you! There was nothing to frighten anybody. Of course the principles were large and general; but the whole address was most conciliatory. It was power in all its gentleness. He is a very great man.

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Nov. 27, 1844.

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

Jane has been mesmerized twice. The second time Mr. Cowderoy produced catalepsy in the right arm, and she has told me that she perceived all that passed behind her, so that we are in a train to get a *clairvoyante* subject if we like. But I have no such intention. . . . Mr. Cowderoy says that if Miss Martineau writes her own cure only, she will do good; but if mixed up with details of a marvellous nature she will only get wrecked upon the sharp edges of prejudice in every quarter. Just look again at her letter, and see if there be not every risk of her proclaiming the dicta of this young ignorant girl, not as the production of a singular state brought about by this new and powerful physical agent, but as real and actual "spiritual dicta"—as things true in themselves, and to be believed, not as the mere expression of a certain sort of delirium, and valuable only as showing the power of the agent. For certainly what is wanted of mesmerism is, not the wild notions of girls of nineteen, but the power to alleviate disease and perform operations without pain. Be quite sure that Miss Martineau will do the cause much harm if she writes about these spiritual dicta in the spirit of her letter.

Do you ever see the 'Phrenological Journal?' In the number for September, Mr. Donovan, whom I have seen here and like much, has an article on an imputed head of Cromwell, which is admirable. If they have it at Saunders & Otley's, do send for the number.

The Oxford papers say that the Queen, when at Strathfieldsaye, is coming here to call upon me. God forbid! No great danger.

Ever your own, my dearest,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT.

Three Mile Cross, Autumn, 1844.

What a very cheap thing childish happiness is! You will be astonished to hear what (besides a sharp feverish attack and writing to you) has occupied my last week —very much astonished. This, dearest, is the fact. I found that the Queen's visit to Strathfieldsaye had strongly excited the interest and curiosity of the little children here, and I determined they should see her and have a holiday. Everybody expected that she would return by Reading (indeed the unlucky mayor sent me word, so late as yesterday morning, that "he had no conviction of her not returning through his town,"—a very grand diplomatic message); and it was only on Wednesday afternoon that I finally ascertained that she would go back by Wokingham, as she came. I then arranged to take all the children (two hundred and ninety) in waggons lent by the kind farmers, as far as Swallowfield Lane, the point where her Majesty turned off from the Basingstoke Road into the Cross Lanes which lead to Wokingham; that they and their schoolmasters and mistresses should meet at nine o'clock at my house, to have delivered to each of them a pretty hand flag of pink and white, made by Jane (who has

fitted up three yachts and was flag-maker-general to the Isle of Wight); that we should then march in procession to the lane, the children riding in waggons decked with laurel and large flags of the same colours: which was done accordingly, I leading the way with Mrs. Amott and her children, the clergyman's family, and some other gentry, followed by a body-guard of great boys, who seeing me walk would not ride (was not that pretty of them?), and meeting there eight or ten carriages containing all the gentlemen's families of the parish.

We had chosen our place well, for the Queen was escorted to that point by her noble host, who took leave of her just in front of our waggons, which looked between the laurels and the pink and white flags like so many masses of painted-lady sweet peas. The party made exactly such a pause in parting, and afforded such a little incident as allowed to everybody the fullest and pleasantest view of those they came to see. After this we all returned, I the last, this time, with Miss Lay—still walking, though I had got into Mrs. Praed's pony chaise to see the sight. We all returned—carriages, waggons, body-guard and all—to my house, where the gentlefolks had sandwiches and cake and wine; and where the children had each a bun as large as a soup-plate, made doubly nice as well as doubly large, a glass of wine, and a mug of ale. All this seems little enough; but the ecstasy of the children made it much. They had been active from four o'clock in the morning. They had been shouting and singing all day. They did sing and shout all the afternoon, for I had made it my particular request to the schoolmistresses and masters that there might be no scolding or keeping in order—flinging ourselves upon the children's own

sense of right. And well did they justify the trust! Never was such harmless jollity! Not an accident! not a squabble! not a misword! It did one's very heart good. Of course we took care of the mistresses and masters also; and their pleasure in the children's pleasure was very good to see—the sympathy all through. To be sure it was a good deal of trouble, and Jane is done up. Indeed, the night before last we none of us went to bed. But it was quite worth it—one of the few days of promised pleasure which in spite of Seyed, Emperor of Ethiopia, do sometimes keep their word. It rained I believe, somebody said so; but nobody minded it, the children least of all. I shall never forget their delight.

The Queen looked pale and ill—simply dressed—smiling and well-behaved; the horses going at a foot pace, and the glasses down. Prince Albert is decidedly handsome. Our Duke went to no great expense. One strip of carpet he bought, the rest of the additional furniture he hired in Reading for the week! The ringers at Strathfieldsaye (and the church is so near the house that William the Fourth, when Duke of Clarence, who had a genius for blundering, when visiting poor Lord Rivers asked if it was not the dog-kennel!)—the ringers, after being hard at work for four hours, sent a can to the house to ask for some strong beer, and the can was sent back empty! Also a poor band, who had been playing till the breath was out of their bodies, begged for a little dinner, and received such a piece of bread as is laid on a napkin for dinner and such a piece of cheese as is sent round on a napkin after dinner. The Duke is a *just* master—as Johnstone, his gardener, said to me once when I idly asked if he were a *kind* one—and not a very bad landlord; but he has no open-heartedness. He is without

that high sense of what is due to his own position which made Napoleon, with all his spirit of order, so truly magnificent. It was a fine balance in Napoleon, which made him equally displeased at Madame Mère's economy and Josephine's debts. The Duke looked relieved beyond all expression when he had made his last bow to his royal visitors; his whole countenance said plainly, "Thank God it's over!" and no doubt he felt so. There was only one most extraordinary thing in our children; Sir Robert Peel passed us, going to town by railway, just at the top of the village, and Jane says that they hissed him! Is not this most remarkable? All our gentry are Conservatives. Now that my dear father is dead, we have not a Whig in the parish. But they said, "There goes Sir Bobby," and they hissed him!

To MISS BARRETT, 50, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Nov. 28, 1844.

MY DEAR LOVE,

I should like to have known Madame d'Abrantes, that is, if she had not been too rich and high a lady; for my adoration of Napoleon, which increases every day, is so borne out by the testimony of one who had such opportunities of knowing him, that it is a most satisfactory and comfortable thing to read all that she says on that subject. Think how he would have enjoyed Balzac! I am sure he would—just as we do. By-the-way, old Mr. Robert (the excellent translator of 'Notre Dame') says he does not think Balzac would suit the taste of the English. The fact is, that there is great peculiarity in the manner as well as matter of Balzac; and it is necessary to learn the character of his style, fine as that style is, just as it is necessary to master a difficult handwriting before enjoying the letters of a correspondent. Also

I doubt whether Balzac be not too good for the taste of English novel readers. Every now and then I find people talking of poor Miss Pickering, as I should talk of Miss Austen or of Scott—persons of sense and education, and high station. And the taste for Mrs. Howitt's translations of Fredrika Bremer (always begging your pardon) seems to me an indication of the same sort.

By-the-way, if I were not so old and stupid and lazy, I should like to try my own hand at translating Balzac, and see if I could not put one of his novels into such English as should give some faint idea of his French. This is not so vain as it seems; for I should try, by the closest adherence to his vivid and coloured language, to produce an almost Chinese copy of this great original; and any person tolerably familiar with prose composition might do this by taking proper pains. Such a translation, giving to it great labour, might, I think, succeed. I do not mean merely *sell*, but might do justice to the manner of the author. This, however, would require an experienced English writer. Dearest love, what works of Casimir Delavigne have you read? Surely not his plays! I have read 'Louis the Eleventh,' 'Marino Faliero,' 'Les Enfans d'Edouard,' 'Don Juan d'Autriche,' 'La Popularité,' 'La Fille du Cid,' 'Une Famille du temps de Luther,' forming the second and third series of his 'Théâtre.' To me they seem full of talent; striking the just medium between the slowness and dullness of what they call the classical drama (I agree with you that is a gross misnomer) and the unnatural and exaggerated contrasts and surprises of Victor Hugo, who strives after effects until he forgets that a true effect should be something perfectly natural—happening at an unexpected moment—or brought about in a striking manner; but always something *natural*—

something that we all feel to be *true.* Now, nobody can say that of Victor Hugo's later plays especially; witness 'Ruy Blas.' Do read Delavigne's plays, pray do. Let me have a conversion to boast of, as you have had in the case of Balzac. (N.B. I don't mean to say that M. Delavigne is as great a man as Balzac; but of a surety he is no common dramatist, and his comedies are of the high serious comedy, like 'Le Misanthrope' carved in marble.) I like that Alexandre Dumas! 'Christina' is a clever drama; but his verse is inferior to Casimir Delavigne's, whose wife was a *protegée* of Josephine and Hortense. Heaven bless you, dearest love!

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Dec. 21, 1844.

Thank you, dearest, for your recommendations of books. The only work of Eugene Sue which I have read among those you ask about, is 'Le Salamandre.' You need not regret it. As strange a work it is as ever was written—with few indications of the power to come. The only remarkable thing is the preface, in which, by way of reason for making all his people unhappy in this world, or rather for taking them out of it by being shot and shooting themselves, he says that to represent good people as successful in this world and rogues as unsuccessful would take away the chief argument for a future life. Now I do really hold that virtue, although not always prosperous, is yet upon the whole far happier than vice. Is not it Pope who calls virtue that "beloved contemned thing"? I am quite sure that to represent systematically vice as fortunate, and goodness as wretched, tends to make selfish people

vicious; and it is really wicked in Balzac to give one the pain he does in this way. In 'Une Ténébreuse Affaire,' for instance, I was so provoked with him for making Napoleon kill Michu and forgive those dolts of gentlemen, that I could have flung the book at his (Balzac's) head, if luckily that wonderful head had been within reach.

Oh! I see that you will not like Casimir Delavigne. It confirms an opinion which I have long entertained, that the drama, *as drama*, is a sealed book to those who have never been in the habit of seeing acted plays. He is just half way between Victor Hugo and Racine; and you may rely upon it, that upon the stage he is much more effective than Victor Hugo, because he deals in none of those violent exaggerations which must frequently come out like caricature when brought into action. Ah! dearest love, Fredrika Bremer! I did read half 'The Neighbours,' and really you are the only person of a high class of mind whom I have found liking her works. Mrs. Jameson said "they could not live;" and William Harness called them "that trash."

Now I think I have written quite enough of sauciness for one evening. Ah! if I were as well behaved as Mrs. Jameson! ! ! I am glad you have seen her. Heaven bless you, my well beloved!

Ever your own,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Dec. 29, 1844.

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

I have read the 'Chimes.' I don't like it. If the story—which now passes, or does not pass in a

vision, or a nightmare—had been told as a truth simply and earnestly, there might have been some meaning in it; but as the matter is, I don't like it. Mr. Dickens wants the earnest good-faith in narration which makes Balzac so enchanting.

I am enchanted to find that you mean to write narrative poetry, and narrative poetry of real life. We must talk over subjects and stories. I still wonder that Napoleon does not inspire you. Oh, what a man! I would have given a limb to have been in the place of Madame Rechard or Madame de Montholon, or even of one of the Miss Balcombs—ay, or to have been concealed somewhere just to have heard him conversing and dictating, but rather conversing. After all, his prophecies are realized. He is the glory of France. Louis Philippe would hardly have sat on the throne so long had he not called in the memory of its idol to fix him in the love of the nation. You won't be sorry, if you happen to forget it, to hear what Napoleon said of Junot—that he was the man to whom he had given more than to any other of his generals; that his extravagance was beyond all bounds; that he never saw him without some fresh demand; that he lived a life of sad debauchery, which, at last, ended in insanity; that, after behaving very strangely in Moscow, Napoleon had given him the government of the Illyrian provinces, where the malady broke out; that he wounded himself fearfully, and shortly after died. He (the Emperor) sent for Madame d'Abrantes to remonstrate with her on the necessity of restraining her husband's extravagances, as well as her own; that she behaved very ill—Napoleon's phrase is, "She treated me like a child." He also speaks quietly of her mother, as having been greatly obliged to his. In short, it is perfectly

clear that, in the romance of Napoleon's love for Madame Permon (a woman ten years older than Josephine), and of his fancy for herself, Madame d'Abrantes says the thing that is not. I always felt that part of her Mémoires to be false. But they are very charming, nevertheless; and the idea of her dying in a hospital is frightful. Do read 'Un Homme Sérieux,' and Béranger's 'Cinq de Mai.'

I can't quite tell yet, dearest, when I shall come, because the weather must get a little better first. But be quite sure that it shall be *soon*. I hope the cessation of frost will be good for you. For my own part, I liked the cold weather; it was so dry. We had, and indeed have still, a family of blackbirds and redbreasts, who came to us every time we opened the door for crumbs and water, and were so tame that they all but fed out of our hands. That's the way I like to have birds. They are quite as tame with Flush; and he likes them as well as we do.

Heaven bless you, my beloved friend!

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

CHAPTER XI.

Letters for 1845.

To Miss Barrett, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Jan. 7, 1845.

I have often wondered, my very dear love, how people can be so foolish, after publishing good works, as to put forth bad ones. It is true that posterity remembers only the good; but how often does it happen that the immediate public, looking at the new bad, forgets or is ignorant of the old good! Just this occurred to me in reading Lamartine's dull piece of extravagance, 'La Chute d'un Ange.' Nothing but your recommendation could have induced me to read another line of his writing. Now, I have gone through 'Jocelyn;' and, although I dislike the story—the heroine in man's clothes, and the hero made a priest, Heaven knows how—I have yet been delighted with the general feeling and beauty of the poem, particularly with one portion full of toleration, and another about dogs. In short, if I could but have forgotten 'La Femme de Quarante Ans'—that inimitable story which is as indelible as 'Don Quixote,' or 'Gil Blas'—I should enter into 'Jocelyn' with real affection. Lamartine is Wordsworthian, certainly; but his sympathies are far wider—I should say far truer. He would never have written the 'Letter on Railways.' Thank you, dear love, for recommending 'Jocelyn.' There are no

inspirations, like 'Le Roi s'amuse;' no exquisite thoughts, exquisitely finished, as in Béranger; still it is a tender, graceful, gracious poem—one that accounts for the feeling expressed towards the writer by his brother authors. By-the-way, Charles de Bernard follows up his attack by another in 'Un Homme Sérieux,' but so good-humouredly and so lightly touched that nobody can be offended. Still his arrows stick. There is no looking at the closed volumes of 'Jocelyn' without thinking of the lover on duty, reading a portion to his mistress to solace her *migraine*, or repeating her favourite lines whilst looking at his star. Those books will live; they are so true, so full of character, and so cheerful. A laugh has a long echo. I agree with you as to 'Un Homme Sérieux.' A happy conclusion has an even infinite advantage over a tragical one. Heaven bless you!

Ever your own,
M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland*

Three Mile Cross, Winter, 1845.

Everybody is talking of Miss Martineau's 'Somnambule.' She writes to Miss Barrett, who forwards her letters to me. The last intelligence is, that Lord Morpeth was on his knees the other evening, talking Greek and Latin, and three modern languages to the poor girl; the Miss Liddells being present. When Imitation was touched, she translated what was said; when Language, she replied to it. I can well believe this, having seen myself things as wonderful. For my own part, I see no good in these experiments; while they will certainly destroy the innocent contentment of the patient, thus forced upon that miserable pinnacle called

notoriety. Charlotte Elizabeth has addressed a letter to Miss Martineau, in which she attributes the agency to Satan.

Before I forget it, let me say that a friend of mine, to whom I was speaking of Dr. Arnold, said, "I knew him well: he was the finest great boy in the world; and the fault of the life is that it does not show him half young enough." This I can well believe. Have you seen dear Miss Barrett's poems? They are making a great impression both in England and America. The last poem in the first volume, 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship,' forty-two pages, was written in a day, and is perhaps the best in the book, almost as wonderful an exploit as any of the feats of mesmerism. Thomas Carlyle, after throwing one MS. into the fire, has sent his 'Life of Cromwell' to the press. Poor Mr. Horne has dislocated his shoulder in skating on the Elbe.

Heaven bless you, dear friend!

Believe me,

Ever faithfully yours,

M. R. M.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, Winter, 1845.

I write to you, dearest Emily, in the midst of a fall of snow, a foot deep at least, which is bad for me, who hate dirt like a cat, and yet shall have to wade through it for the rest of the month; my daily walks being not only the necessity of existence to me, so far as health is concerned, but also the chief means of my social pleasures; for since I have made the grand discovery that a lantern is as good as a moon, I trot about at night with a maid, not merely to country neighbours, but to lectures and concerts in Reading, where I have a whole Me-

chanics' Institute as an object of interest and pleasure. It does me good to see how cultivated and civilised the young artisans are become. For instance, Reading, with its noisy, bustling, craving commerce, is struck with admiration of Elizabeth Barrett's high-toned poetry; and the League Committee have sent to request her to contribute a poem to the ladies' bazaar. Whether she will do so or not I cannot tell. But I am sure the poem will be written, although her father, who is only a Whig, may have influence enough to prevent his Radical daughter from complying with the request.

Have you read Dr. Arnold's 'Lectures on History'? —the Oxford lectures? I think it the most remarkable of all his works for large and luminous views.

Have you read Lever's 'O'Donoghue?' It promises even better than his other works, and I think him one of our best living writers of fiction. But our literature seems really cold and dead by the side of the intense and palpitating writings of *La jeune France*, so full of genius, with all their faults.

Ever, dearest friend,

Very faithfully yours,

M. R. M.

To Miss Barrett, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, Jan. 17, 1845.

What disenchanting things these autographs are! When I was at Clifton, my friend Mr. Johnson brought to show Miss James some American signatures, South and North, curious Spanish documents as far back as the Conquest, and all the Presidents' autographs; and those of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence. Amongst them was a correspondence of General Washington's.

Washington was a Virginian, remember, and they are all horse-jockeys, just as the Yorkshire squires of the last century were; and this series of letters from the great patriot contain as notable an endeavour to "do" an acquaintance in the sale of an English horse as ever figured in the annals of Newmarket. I have no great fancy for the celebrated personage in question. He was much too cold and calculating for me, and I was exceedingly amused at the correspondence, the *genuineness* of which was testified in a manner that could not be disputed. Also there were certain directions about his blacks, not a little shocking to the Abolitionists of the present day. Fine words—patriotism and disinterestedness, and so forth! grand to write and to listen to! But look at the real truth, and out comes the great patriot jockeying his acquaintance (for he "dear-sir'd" the poor man all through) after a fashion, which would have merited a place in 'Bell's Life,' and run a chance of incurring the wider celebrity of the Old Bailey. Ah! it is a fine thing is patriotism!

Nevertheless, you may laugh at me in turn, for dear Mr. Kenyon can bear witness that I *once* asked for an autograph myself—no less than Daniel O'Connell's, the only one I ever did ask, and which (except I could add to it the signature of Napoleon) will ever remain alone in my desk, for a great man I still think him, and one whom I should gladly know. Mr. Townsend (he is, you know, a proctor of Doctors' Commons) promised me, if I came there to see him, that I should hold in my hands, at one time, *his* and Milton's, and Shakespeare's signatures to wills, of unquestioned and unquestionable authenticity. Mr. Kenyon had the goodness to help me to Mr. O'Connell's.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, March 18, 1845.

Oh! my very dear love, I grieve that, as I had feared, you are suffering from this weather. It cannot last long, indeed I think that it is breaking already. I have had a present of some roses blown in a hothouse —cut flowers. Yesterday morning they were found on the drawing-room table, with their stalks in ice, instead of water. All the contents of the vase was frozen into a solid mass; and that, in a room with a fire every day, on the 17th of March! Poor pretty roses! They did not mind it at all, and looked just as fresh and smelt as sweet as in their native conservatory. It was a strange contrast, to look at the green stalks crowned with such splendid blossoms and fixed into a mass of solid ice—summer and winter in one's hand at once. But the ice melted and the roses remained; and that is an emblem of what we may hope for now. There is comfort in that thought. My poor Flush suffers much from the weather. He has had a bad cough; and now that that is gone he has had a frightful attack of cramp from the cold. I was obliged to get him carried to Mrs. Amott's, for he could not walk; and, in her warm room, in about an hour he so far recovered as to walk home. But, poor love, he has been very, very poorly and will hardly get out.

I have the first volume of Victor Hugo's 'Odes et Ballades,' but they are slavishly loyal to those vile old Bourbons. What could he see in them? I suppose I shall like the second volume better.

Heaven bless you, my beloved friend!

Ever your own,

M. R. M.

To MISS BARRETT, *Wimpole Street.*

Three Mile Cross, April 10, 1845.

"MINE OWN LOVE,

I have had a wandering poetess here to-day. She and her mother are driving about the land in a pony-chaise, selling, for five shillings, books typographically worth about eightpence—poetically, good for nothing. The mamma asks one to patronize her daughter—one's 'fellow-poetess'—and won't go till she has got the money. She wanted to pay *you* a visit, "having heard your name at Bear Wood." Of course I stopped that, and, as they are going westward, there is no danger of any incursion. I gave both ladies some very good advice, which wil very certainly not be taken; for such conceit, such ignorance, above all, such total ignorance of the state of literature at this time I never encountered. They asked me for a book to teach the art of poetry—a book of rules, as in arithmetic. For certain, the young lady wants one; she makes "reign" rhyme to "name;" "line" to "lime," and so on, and is, by very far, too vain and self-absorbed ever to do better. She has not an atom of the enthusiasm of youth, and admires nobody but herself. But think of the impudence of stopping at the door of everybody, whose name they ever heard, and demanding five shillings, before it is possible to get quit of them! Their first step was to put their horse in the stable and demand hay and corn. Nothing but pen and ink could inspire such surpassing assurance.

Poor Dr. Baines! I have been inexpressibly affected by hearing from Mr. Bonomi that, on the very last day of his honoured life, when returning from Bristol, he had said to him, "Now that we are quiet again we

will write and ask Miss Mitford to come to Prior Park for a week or ten days." I never saw any man so perfectly interesting, not merely from talent, but from simplicity and goodness. There was a mixture of playfulness and *bonhomie* most enchanting. And he liked me—one always finds out that, and was kinder than I have words to tell. You can hardly imagine, my dearest Emily, how much his death has saddened Bath to me. I had been exceedingly disappointed in the town itself—its deadness and dullness—the cold colour and the monotony of the buildings. Any one accustomed to London must have that feeling; but Prior Park redeemed all. Did you go there? Mr. Bonomi is coming to me on his return from his relatives at York; and I think the establishment will continue. But the guiding spirit is gone. You would have loved Dr. Baines.

There have been, doubtless, difficulties of all sorts during the last unprecedented month of March. Even the violets have been not only late, but scarce; and yet what enjoyment I have had in getting them!

Ever your own,

M. R. M.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross [about July, 1845].

It is very long since I have written to you, dearest Emily; but I have been to town, partly to see dearest Miss Barrett, partly moving about—and staying far too short a time, as may be proved by my leaving twenty-seven invitations behind me, so full is London, and so seldom do I visit it. I saw many celebrated people, among them Mrs. Gore, who, by-the-way, having inherited what she calls forty thousand acres of rattlesnakes

in Nova Scotia, is going there and to America, and will make a piquant book about it. The Houses of Parliament are very fine. I also went to the Horticultural Fête at Chiswick—a pretty sight, but so fatiguing that I firmly resolved never to go again. Think of fifteen thousand people—fine people—and the heat and dust and crowd—all standing and walking for five hours. The fruit was guarded by twelve policemen, and the refreshments, not only served by tickets purchased at another part of the garden, but guarded by palisades, and handed out through little sliding panels, like those in the doors of our model prison; the barricades being rendered necessary by an onslaught a year or two ago, in which the ice was carried off by the company! Now, I am returned, and expecting Mrs. Davidson and Mr. Horne—not in the house, but to lodge near—and look for Mrs. Jameson, Mr. Lucas, Mr. Browne, Mr. Chorley, Mr. Wright, and others of my friends, to spend a day here. I did talk of going to France, but must give it up for want of money; and I am going to part with my geraniums and pets for the same reason.

Have you seen Hood's 'Song of the Shirt?'—a most striking bit of homely pathos. I like Dickens's 'Christmas Carol,' too, very much—not the ghostly part, of course, which is very bad; but the scenes of the clerk's family are very fine and touching. Also Harriet Martineau's new book is striking ('Life in a Sick Room'), though rather exaggerated and over-wrought.

Did I tell you that Mr. Taylor, the medical lecturer at Guy's, and one of the cleverest persons I ever knew, was taking rubbings of the different brasses in the churches round, this year? I was much struck by the simplicity and piety of the old inscriptions, and Mr. Taylor agreeing with me, he has had the goodness to

procure an inscription for me to be executed in London, to be placed over my dear father and mother, in Shenfield Church. I send you a rubbing of it, which you will perhaps, my dear friend, have the goodness to return, as I wish to show it to different friends. Mr. Taylor took it to the Camden Society, where the simplicity and novelty excited very considerable sensation. Above a hundred people have taken down the name of the engraver; and it is very probable that the old fashion will be revived. I did not think of *that*, as you may well imagine; at the same time I fully expect that such will be the consequence; for besides the beauty of the execution, and the durability (for the letters are cut full half an inch into the brass, and it would last a thousand years), the cheapness is extraordinary, this exquisitely executed plate having only cost fifty shillings. Tell me if you do not prefer this humble inscription to the pompous epitaphs one commonly sees? I do.

I went to town last week, to see Miss Barrett—going at nine o'clock, and returning the same evening at six—a great fatigue. The favourite subject in London is the *clairvoyance*, Dr. Elliotson having made over his pupils and patients to Mr. Babbage, and other scientific persons, for examination. Really the stories they tell (and they entered upon the subject with the impression that it was all a cheat) are more startling than anything I have heard in my day, only far too long for a letter.

No! I have not seen the Chinese dogs. I should like to do so; but I only walk now, and want to find a good master or mistress for my pretty pony. He goes into Reading, to the station (four miles), in fourteen minutes, is six years old, under duty, and most beautiful.

Do mention him to your correspondents. I am afraid to sell him at fairs, for fear of his falling into hands who would make bets upon him, poor little thing! He follows me round the garden, and into the house, and eats apples and carrots out of my hand. We have had here four incendiary fires! I don't know for what—mere wantonness.

Heaven bless you, my very dear love!

Ever yours,
M. R. M.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr.*

Three Mile Cross, Autumn, 1845.

MY DEAR LOVE,

Your dear letter found me after a three weeks' confinement from sickness every night, and the most acute pain in the lower limbs. Mr. May says that the terrible pain, which is just like tic doloureux, in the knee-joints, *is* a pressure upon some nerve; but I cannot get rid of the fear that it is rheumatic, and that I may, some day or other lose the use of my limbs, and go about like those poor cripples in Bath, dragged along in tall chairs, looking to me the very emblems of misery. I can't help quoting Shakespeare's "cold sciatica;" for the pain only yields to dry heat, actual washing in front of the fire, and the flesh is often as cold as marble, while the perspiration is pouring over the limb. To-day, however, I am a little better, and have crept into the gar len to look at my dahlias. One of my seedlings is so fine that we have sold it for twenty pounds, the highest price given for a dahlia this year. Are we not lucky to have so good a dahlia? I don't know what the nursery man (Mr. Bragge of Slough) means to call it. It is white, of the most exquisite shape and cleanness, tipped with

puce colour. We have some very fine seedlings *this* year, and our great bed is also full of fine old dahlias—I mean those raised by other growers; for I don't believe that we have one more than three years old, except the old Springfield, which I insist upon keeping for "auld lang syne." It seems to me quite grievous to throw away our ancient favourites in flowers; still it is what must be done, to keep pace with the collections round.

We have only twenty-four new seedling geraniums, having given our cast-off seedlings chiefly to nurserymen for sale, in exchange for pots and new plants of other sorts, and Mr. Foster's and Mr. Garth's best new sorts—not one past three years old even of theirs, and not one raised by any other grower. This looks like great boasting, but you must come and see next year. In the meanwhile, this twenty pounds, besides the credit, will pay for glass and coals (Ben does the glazing and carpentering and blacksmith's work all himself, as well as the painting), and justify me to myself for my only extravagance—my dear flowers. What should I, who have only Flush to love me, and poor Ben and K——, and K——'s little boy, do without flowers? Ah! dearest Emily, I often think that of all the goodness of God, as shown to us in this beautiful world, that little world of flowers is, in its sweetness and innocence and peace, the truest and best example of what we ought to try to be ourselves; opening our hearts, as best we may, to the bright sunshine and the pure air of heaven; and sweetening and beautifying, to our fellow-creatures, the path of life along which we dwell.

No, my dear, that iris is not the fleur-de-lis, nor anything like it. It is a pretty, but not rare iris; whereas the real fleur-de-lis is very rare indeed. It is of that class popularly called the flag iris, above six feet high

and two or three times as large—I mean the flower. I suspect the plant to be semi-aquatic. Its having blown in two gardens after this wet spring—in one of which it had been for twelve years, in the other for twenty—without flowering, looks like it, does it not? These two are the only ones I know. The lower petal of the true flower is much more opaque, with a large oval golden spot, like ivory inlaid with gold and surrounded with alabaster.

Do you read 'Blackwood?' If you do, you will be pleased with Mr. Eagle's account of Mr. Poole's great picture.

Make my kindest love to the dear Crowthers. Did you know my friend Lady Morton, the young widow of the old Lord Chamberlain? She is again a widow, and wants me to spend the autumn and winter with her in Essex. I feel that I cannot; and yet I must, unless too ill for the effort.

Yours ever,

M. R. M.

CHAPTER XII.

Letters for 1846–51.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, Spring, 1846.

Did you hear that my beloved friend Elizabeth Barrett is married? Love really is the wizard the poets have called him; a fact which I always doubted till now. But never was such a miraculous proof of his power as her travelling across France by diligence, by railway, by Rhone boat—anyhow, in fact; and having arrived in Pisa so much improved in health that Mrs. Jameson, who travelled with them, says she is "not merely improved but transformed." I do not know Mr. Browning; but this fact is enough to make me his friend. He is a poet also; but I believe that his acquirements are more remarkable than his poetry, although that has been held to be of high promise.

Mr. May tells me that I shall do better by-and-by—that the cold weather brought the rheumatism—and that the warm weather will carry it away. Every one has suffered from this most ungenial winter, and even now we can hardly call it spring.

If you write to any one in London, recommend their going to see a magnificent portrait of Charles the First when Prince Charles, taken during his romantic expedi-

tion into Spain, and supposed to be the last picture which Velasquez painted.

It is full of health and life, and although there be something in the full eyelid that gives a shade of pensiveness to the face, yet there is so much spirit and youthfulness that it is quite free from the sadness of the Vandyke and Dobson portraits. Did I tell you that I had found a mention of this very picture in the notes to Hayley's poem on painting? He (Hayley) was, you know, a great Spanish scholar. Altogether I think it the very finest picture I have ever seen.

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. M.

To Miss Jephson, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, Spring, 1846.

Thank you heartily for your dear letter, dear Emily, and the pretty knitted square for the pincushion. I do not need anything to be reminded of you, but if I did that would do it. Can you send me a bit of the plait that the Queen does? I remember, thirty years ago, that I made plait for three or four nets and bonnets, and liked the work much, inasmuch as it required no attention, and I could go on even while I was reading. I hate all the Berlin wool misdoings, which require counting, and seem to me calculated to keep down the intellect while they employ the fingers; but work (like tatting, for instance) which goes on without requiring any thought is sometimes pleasant.

I am still so lame as to be obliged to get a pony chaise, under pain of not being able to put foot to the ground if I persisted in taking long walks; and K—— not only drives the pony, but feeds him and takes care of the harness, while a respectable man next door takes

charge of the garden. So that I may perhaps escape the danger of being whirled to the Queen's Bench by my new equipage, although compelled to the most minute attention to economy by this new and inevitable expense. Without it I could hardly crawl to church.

I am convinced that all education should be based upon religion; but it seems to me that religious instruction is rather aided than impeded by being accompanied by other means of cultivating the intellect and the affections. Rich people do not confine all education to religious instruction; and I don't think that poor ones should be restricted to that only. For instance, there is a school in Reading, one of the old-fashioned endowments, where children were clothed, fed, and taught, and where they used to take in turn the house work, the cooking, the laundry; to do plain work; to make and cut out their own linen and clothes; and, in short, to be trained into excellent servants. Well! since the town has become so Puseyite that the different churches are open almost all day for different services, these children are taken in procession to the different churches four times every day —four times—interrupting all their avocations, and entirely putting a stop to their needlework.

Does not it strike you that this must tend either to weary the children or to make them hypocrites? I think so; and a very clever clergyman with whom I was talking of it this very day at Sir John Conroy's said that there could be no doubt in his mind but that when they left the school to go out to service they would leave it less religious than in the old days, when they went twice on a Sunday to church, and on Wednesday and Friday evenings to a lecture. One thing certain is, that they have quite lost their old repute for good training as servants; and that it is difficult now to find them places,

because (as the mistress herself told me) nearly all their time is passed in going to church or dressing to prepare for it. I believe the intention to be good; but I doubt its efficacy as I doubt all excess.

Yours ever,

M. R. M.

To MISS JEPHSON, *Castle Martyr, Ireland.*

Three Mile Cross, July, 1846.

MY DEAR EMILY,

I am sincerely rejoiced to hear that you have not suffered so much as I feared from the hot weather. It disagreed exceedingly with me; but, nevertheless, I contrived to walk through it, although the dust and the unmitigated glare were most painful and trying. My roses were blighted, my annuals dried off, and my geraniums have flagged and fallen under the glare in a most miserable manner. The peas, too, lasted only four or five days; and, in short, all vegetation has suffered. The rhododendrons at Whiteknights and at Bearwood I never saw so fine, and my strawberries have prospered; but the currants are blighted, and they say there are in this county no apples at all.

I have been shocked past expression by the death of poor Haydon. He had sent me a ticket for a private view of his pictures only a month or two back; and we had been friends and correspondents for above thirty years. Poor fellow! He was a most brilliant person, and deserved a better fate, although he never quite kept the promise of his earlier works—never, indeed, brought out anything so really fine as the 'Judgment of Solomon,' which my friend Sir William Elford purchased for six hundred pounds; and which first brought him into notice. Sir Robert Peel's conduct on this occasion has been very noble.

Have you read the 'Life and Letters of John Foster?' I think them even finer than Dr. Arnold's; and you know what that is saying. I always thought the 'Essays' amongst the finest ever written; but the 'Life and Letters' make me think the man himself even nobler than his works? Did you know him? He lived for the better part of his life near Bristol. How wonderful that a small sect like the Baptists should have, at one time and in one narrow locality, two such giants as John Foster and Robert Hall!

Miss Gladstone used to write to me occasionally; and I have heard much of her from some mutual friends now dead. She ceased to write upon her conversion; and dear Dr. Baines told me that it was of no use for me to write to her in her nunnery (she is a professed nun, is she not?), for that all communication with the world was discouraged in those institutions. He disliked them much.

Yours, affectionately,
M. R. M.

1847.

Fragment of a Letter to MISS JEPHSON. [No date.]

For my part I hate conversions. There is enough for salvation in the Gospels, under whatever form of Christianity we may worship; and to convert from one form to another is always to unsettle—to root up old associations—and often to loosen the larger and more vital articles of faith. Dryden has somewhere a fine thought—I forget the words—but the meaning is this: "The soul is like a bird at roost; dislodge it from its twig and it flutters from branch to branch, unable to

settle once again in peace and quietness." I have known many such. A daughter of one of my dearest friends was brought up a Protestant like her two sisters—the father being Protestant, the mother (a French woman) Roman Catholic. Since the father's death the eldest daughter has joined her mother's communion, the youngest remains a bigoted Protestant, and this middle girl goes to no church and professes no faith whatsoever.

To the Rev. Alexander Dyce, *Gray's Inn.*

Three Mile Cross, July 1847.

I cannot thank you enough, my dear Mr. Dyce, for all your kindness to me, and to the dear little girl whose album your beautiful verses will tend so much to enrich.

'The Beggar Girl'* is so exactly in the garb in which I first read her some five-and-forty years ago in Hans Place, that I can't help thinking it must be the same copy, and anticipate the same delight from the perusal that I had in those young days. I remember that I liked it not only for the characters and the liveliness, but for the abundant story—incident toppling upon incident; all sufficiently natural and probable, after a fashion which the novelists of these times seem to have lost; for now-a-days they generously give us one or two great impossibilities, and fill up their outline with declamation and sentiment generally false.

Accept once again my earnest thanks for your kindness; above all for your goodness in coming to see me with our dear friend, Mr. Harness. Pray, come again.

Ever, my dear Mr. Dyce,

Very faithfully yours,

M. R. Mitford.

* A novel by Mrs. Bennett, once extremely popular, which Mr. Dyce, after some difficulty, had procured for her.

1848.

To MRS. BROWNING, *Florence, Italy.*

Taplow, July 30, 1848.

I have taken so much of your advice, my very dear love, as Mr. May thought right—that is to say, the part that regarded change of air and change of scene. He said that the sea, in my particular case, would be rather bad than good, and advised a short journey, where I could have my pony chaise among interesting scenery, and not beyond reach of him. Accordingly here I am, about twenty miles from home—in a pretty house, with our rooms opening on a garden full of trees and flowers, which goes down to the Thames (we have our own private stairs and landing from the little terrace), and the beautiful old bridge just below. A prettier English scene does not exist. I have already driven to Orkwells, the beautiful old hall of the Norreys, part of which is just as it was in the reign of Henry the Sixth—and that part the most important—the banquet hall, with its dais and music-gallery and long range of painted windows—the open galleries, buttery hatch, porch and gables, with the exquisite carving of their fretted roof as delicate as a lady's fan. Then I have been (where I have permission to go every day) through Lord Orkney's noble woods to Cliefden Spring—a woody acclivity (of I am afraid to say what height) on one side, and the bright river on the other—the actual

"Cliefden's proud alcove,"

where Lady Shrewsbury held her lover the Duke of Buckingham's horse, while he fought with and killed her husband. Then to Burnham Beeches—a piece of

forest scenery hardly to be matched in England, whether as regards the ground or the magnificent trees. Then to the vaults at Lady Place, where the Revolution of 1688 was hatched, and which looks just fit for such a holy conspiracy, standing, as it does now, with the old mansion taken down, in the midst of its romantic lawn. All these I have seen, and to-morrow I am going to Dropmore; and I am more improved in health and strength and spirits than I had thought possible.

One reason why I am so much better here is, that I have only one female friend (and that a very favourite one) within reach—half of my worries proceeding from a quantity of tiresome visitors. Some I have seen this summer who are not tiresome—the Miss Goldsmids, Sir Isaac Goldsmid's daughters. The eldest is a very remarkable woman, and she spoke of Mr. Browning with great interest, as having been at the London University with her brothers. Also Mr. Ruskin spoke of some vintage verses of his as singularly true to nature; and his praise is worth having. He is a most charming person, but was, when I last heard of him, laid up at Salisbury. I fear for his health, and so does his mother.

Ah! my dear love, I have nothing but fear for France. As to Lamartine, I never did expect any good from him; except 'Les Girondins,' I always detested his writings—so weak and wordy and full of vanity. And 'Les Girondins,' they say, is untrue beyond the usual untruthfulness of history—a mere party pamphlet. When he was in London a few years ago Mr. Rogers asked him, with strong interest, to give him some details about Béranger, "the greatest French poet." "Ah! Béranger," said M. de Lamartine, "he made advances to me, and, of course, wished for my acquaintance; but he is a sort of man with whom I do not choose to have any

connexion!" Think of that! Mr. Rogers told the story himself, with the greatest indignation, to the Ruskins, and they told it to me.

Dumas has been in England with his *Théâtre Historique*—the whole company—playing 'Monte Christo' (which takes two evenings) at Drury Lane. To the great disgrace of our people, authors and actors, the French troop were hissed off. I am told that what astonished him most in our country was to find what a number of persons (turnpike commissioners, county magistrates, deputy lieutenants, &c.) exercised their offices gratuitously; but the poverty of the French would not admit of their working for nothing. It is wonderful how poor they all seem. Dumas' last works are 'Les Quarante Cinq,' 'De Paris à Cadiz,' and a book on Algiers. Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton has just brought out an historical novel called 'Harold'—good as history, but dull as a story. Bentley gave fifteen hundred pounds for the copyright—an immense sum. Mr. Kingsley's play upon Elizabeth of Hungary, 'The Saint's Tragedy,' is really fine and striking, but miserably painful to read; the more so, as the most disgusting parts are literally true.

I shall be returning to Three Mile Cross in about ten days or a fortnight, having by that time, if it please God, laid in a stock of health for the winter. God bless you, my beloved friend! A pleasant excursion to Mr. Browning.

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. BROWNING, *Florence.*

Three Mile Cross, Sept. 1848.

How earnestly I rejoice, my beloved friend, in your continued health! and how very, very glad I shall be to see you and your baby. Remember me to Wilson, and tell her that I am quite prepared to admire him as much as will even satisfy her appetite for praise. How beautifully you describe your beautiful country! Oh! that I were with you, to lose myself in the chestnut forests, and gather grapes at the vintage! If I had but Prince Houssein's carpet, I would set forth and leave Mr. May to scold and wonder, when he comes to see me to-morrow. He seems well disposed to shut me up for a month or two. Besides the chestnut woods and you, your ownselves, I should be delighted to see Mr. Lever. You know I have always had a mannish sort of fancy for those 'Charles O'Malley' and 'Jack Hinton' books, which always put me in good spirits and good humour (I wish he wrote so now); and I remember hearing from his illustrator, Mr. Browne, that he was exactly the 'Harry Lorrequer' he describes—that is to say, full of life and glee, and all that is animating and agreeable. I remember, too, most gratefully the pleasure his books gave to my father.

'The Princess' has fine things, but would certainly not have made a reputation. It is a poem of a hundred and fifty pages, all in blank verse—enclosed within a setting of blank verse also—and the very songs introduced are of the same metre. The story is very unskilfully told, with an entire want of dramatic power, and full of the strangest words brought in after the strangest fashion. It begins in mockery, and becomes earnest as it goes on; but there are, as I said before, fine things in it.

God bless you, my beloved friend! Say everything for me to Mr. Browning. Kiss baby for me, and pat Flush. I have written out the pain.

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

I have made many inquiries about Miss Martineau; but my only answer has been from Mrs. Onory (Jane Nicholls), who lives in her circle, and says, "All I know about her is that she has brought a pipe from the East, and smokes it every day. Perhaps that may be to subdue pain or deaden irritation."

1849.

To MRS. BROWNING, *Florence.*

Swallowfield, March 11, 1849.

I have been miserably ill all this winter, dearest love. For above three months I do not think that I was three times out of bed at eight o'clock; and to any one who knew my late habits, *that* says enough. If I went out for a little walk (and I have been now so lame for a twelvemonth that I can only walk a very little way), or even if a friend came to see me, I became so exhausted as to be compelled to go to bed, hardly able often to get up stairs. And with this entire loss of power came total loss of spirits. Mr. May said the only remedy was air without fatigue, and ordered me to go out every day in an open carriage. In consequence, we bought a high-priced, highly-recommended pony—the vendor, a very rich man, and supposed to be respectable, knowing that it was for an elderly invalid lady and her maid, and

answering for it as sound and right. Ben drove it ten miles and it went beautifully (we suppose it was starved for the occasion). The next day K—— and I set forth to go to Reading, and at the bottom of the hill leading to the town it kicked the carriage to pieces with me in it; and afterwards kicked another carriage to atoms into which it was put, to try if two vigorous and experienced coachmen could manage it. Under Providence I owe my life entirely to the courage and fidelity of my brave and faithful little maid. She got off (we neither of us knew how) and flew to the head of the furious animal, holding on to the bit and bridle, at the peril of life and limb for many minutes, until a sufficient number of men was collected to draw me out (pretty much as a plant might be drawn out by the roots) and carry me across the road. Five or six men were afraid to hold the vicious beast that she had held. Does not this justify affection by affection—for that was her strength? Her left hand was much sprained, and her right side strained by her efforts; but I am sure that she would have held on until she was dead or I rescued. The two people (strong men, used to furious horses all their lives) who afterwards got up behind the pony, both escaped from the carriage and left it to work its will. The vendor knew perfectly the beast he was selling. This accident has shaken me much. My health and strength seem gone altogether. In short, dearest love, I am full ten years older than before my lameness last year.

Who told you, my dear love, that William Harness praised 'The Princess' in MS.? When he was with me in August, and the poem was printing, he had not read it. His friend, Mr. Dyce, who accompanied him, had, and spoke of it sweetly and indulgently, as he speaks of all things, but on the whole very truly, as an imper-

fect work with very fine bits. Heaven bless you, my beloved friend!

Ever most faithfully and affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. BROWNING, *Lucca, Italy.*

Three Mile Cross, Dec. 16, 1849.

This is my birthday (sixty-two), my beloved friend, and I cannot better employ it than in answering your dear letter received two days ago. For myself, I should certainly have said that I was much better than this time last year, if it were not that I have had to-day a touch of that painful neuralgia, and that I have been suffering in consequence of having the small-pox in the house. It has been most rife in the neighbourhood, and very heavy. Three or four persons have died of it after vaccination.

All the world is publishing. Alfred Tennyson says that people now-a-days are not merely indifferent to poetry—that they absolutely hate it. I heard this from a sweet young woman (Mary Repton, daughter of one of the prebendaries of Westminster), who is staying close by, at Mrs. Anderdon's, and has taken to me as young people sometimes do. She is intimate, very, with all the Tennysons, and speaks of them more highly than I ever heard any one; perhaps because she knows them better. She says that they are the most unworldly people she ever knew, valuing everybody by the personal qualities, apart from all considerations of rank or wealth or fame or consideration. Indolence is the besetting sin of the race; but they can work if they will. For instance, she made Alfred dig up the whole garden at her father's country living near Sevenoaks; and he did it capitally.

1850.

To MRS. BROWNING, *Florence, Italy.*

Three Mile Cross, March 25, 1850.

MY 'Country Stories' are just coming out, to my great contentment, in the 'Parlour Library,' for a shilling, or perhaps ninepence—that being the price of Miss Austen's novels. I delight in this, and have no sympathy with your bemoanings over American editions. Think of the American editions of my prose. 'Our Village' has been reprinted in twenty or thirty places, and 'Belford Regis' in almost as many; and I like it. So do *you*, say what you may. Mr. Fields, the handsome Boston bookseller, Mr. Ticknor's partner, sent me a copy of their edition of Mr. Browning's poems, and very nicely done it is, preceded by Mr. Landor's sonnet.

After all, my dear friend, Mrs. Acton Tindal was mistaken in her account of the authorship of 'Jane Eyre.' It was really written by a Miss Bronté, a clergyman's daughter, diminutive almost to dwarfishness—a woman of thirty, who had hardly ever left her father's parish in Yorkshire. There is great success in mystery. I think, from a thing that I have heard lately, that Sir R. Vyvyan *is* the author of the 'Vestiges.'

Well; but was not that song most sweet and harmonious, and full of grace and beauty? and what would you ask for more? A song is not necessarily an ode. For my part, I delight in such bits of melody, floating about you upon the air. I wish I dared give it to Henry Phillips, to whom I have just sent a fine transla-

tion of a German song written, words and music, by one of Prince Eugene's old troopers, and picked up by a friend of mine among the soldiers at Ehrenbreitstein.

God bless you, my very dear love! K—— has been very ill, but is better. Say everything for me to Mr. Browning, and believe me ever,

Faithfully and most affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. JENNINGS.

Three Mile Cross, April 16, 1850.

Yes! dearest Mrs. Jennings, there certainly is a sympathy, I have remarked it a hundred times, and I think our writing just at one time proves it completely. I do trust that it will lead me to London before you leave it. In other words, I constantly hope that we may meet this spring; but my coming is still uncertain, and depends upon half a dozen small circumstances over which I have myself no control. First of all, my poor cottage is falling about my ears. We were compelled to move my little pony from his stable to the chaise-house, because there were in the stable three large holes big enough for me to escape through. Then came a windy night and blew the roof from the chaise-house. And truly the cottage proper, where we two-legged creatures dwell, is in little better condition; the walls seem to be mouldering from the bottom, crumbling, as it were, like an old cheese; and, whether anything can be done with it, is doubtful. Besides which, as it belongs to chancery wards, there is a further doubt whether the Master will do what may be done.

I only want a cottage with a good bedroom, a decent sitting-room, and perhaps two odd rooms, anywhere, for books; for I find, upon taking stock, that I shall have

from five thousand to six thousand. All these are reasons against going far; and, indeed, there is a cottage here which, if I can take, I shall.

Yours most sincerely,

M. R. M.

To MRS. BROWNING, *Florence, Italy.*

Three Mile Cross, July 1, 1850.

I cannot enough thank you, my beloved friend, for your most welcome letter. The pleasure it gave me would have been unmingled but for its delaying the hope of seeing you. But, if you come so near as France, then we shall meet here, I hope, and there—I mean both in France and in England; for I do still hope to get as far as Paris before I die. At present I cannot tell you where I am going. The cottage at Swallowfield that I want to rent, belonged to a crotchetty old bachelor; he, dying, left it for her life to a sister, a rich widow, aged seventy-seven, and after her death to another relative. It is about six miles from Reading, on this same road, leading up from which is a short ascending lane, terminated by this small dwelling, with a court in front, and a garden and paddock behind. Trees overarch it like the frame of a picture, and the cottage itself, although not pretty, yet too unpretending to be vulgar, and abundantly snug and comfortable, leading by different paths to all my favourite walks, and still within distance of my most valuable neighbours. It will be provoking if this woman, who has known me for forty years, and to whom my father rendered a thousand services, should, from spite to Captain Beauchamp and his excellent father, resolve rather to let the cottage tumble to pieces than admit

a tenant whom they wish to see there, or indeed any tenant at all.

You are most kind in your inquiries about my health. I cannot but think myself better on the whole than when I wrote last, and you will wonder to hear that I have again taken pen in hand. It reminds me of Benedick's speech—"When I said I should die a bachelor, I never thought to live to be married;" but it is our friend Henry Chorley's fault. He has taken to 'The Lady's Companion,' a weekly journal, belonging to Bradbury and Evans, that was going to decay (like my dwellings, present and future) under the mismanagement of Mrs. Loudon, and came to me to help him. He wanted a novel; then, finding that out of the question, he wanted something else; and, though I have refused every applicant to right and left for these eight years, this very Mrs. Loudon included, and began of course, by refusing him, he is such a very old friend, that I really could not persist in saying No to him. So at last it ended in my undertaking to give him a series of papers to be called 'Readings of Poetry, Old and New,' consisting of as much prose as he can get, and extracts from favourite poets.

[*Conclusion lost.*]

To Mrs. Jennings, *Portland Place.*

Three Mile Cross, Nov. 9, 1850.

Your two delightful letters, my very dear Mrs. Jennings, deserve a better return than they are likely to get at this moment. Nevertheless, I cannot put off writing any longer. When the days get a little longer —that is to say, early in the new year—I shall do by you what I used to do by Elizabeth Barrett—take a return ticket to go up for the day to Portland Place,

arriving about three o'clock, or two perhaps, and returning by the half-past seven o'clock train. Then we can have a grand discussion upon a Welsh cottage. You and Mr. Jennings are the temptations; the distance, and absence of books, the objections. But we must meet and have a long talk. Are there dry winter walks? that is a great point. I live entirely, I may say, on boiled sole, boiled whiting, and fruit; fish of any other sort I could not touch. And fruit—strawberries, for instance, currants, grapes—must be come-at-able, in large quantities and for a long time. We have now out-of-door grapes hung up to last till March. This, dear friend, is a point of health with me. I never can eat meat or butter, or milk or eggs, or poultry. Is there good *brown* bread? All these questions we can discuss, and I mention them now that you may ask. But I dread the want of books; I have the habit of running over almost every book of any note that is published; and a book club always has seemed to me a sort of mental imprisonment—a shutting into one little room, and being kept on water gruel. Then I have five thousand or six thousand volumes to move, as well as furniture. About neighbours I do not care. Mr. Jennings and you, and one clever man, would do. I rather dislike neighbours —don't you? Do you remember what Horace Walpole says of the country?—"Questions grow there, and the Christian commodity neighbours." That has always seemed to me among the raciest of his racy bits. You and Mr. Jennings are the temptation. And then, this cottage is likely to fall about my ears; yet I cling to it —to the green lanes—which you have not seen—to the commons, the copses, the old trees—every bit of the old country. It is only a person brought up in the midst of woods and fields, in one country place, who can

understand that strong local attachment. But we must talk over the matter; most assuredly nothing but illness shall prevent my having the great pleasure of going to see you in London. You must thank for me your pleasant friend. I am ashamed not to recollect him; but that Manor House has had so many guests, that one gets confounded amongst them. Was he a visitor of Sir William Pym?

Just now, I have been much interested by a painting that has been going on in the corner of our village street —the inside of an old wheelwright's shop—a large barn-like place, open to the roof, full of detail, with the light admitted through the half of hatch doors, and spreading upwards. It is a fine subject, and finely treated. The artist is one, not yet much known, of the name of Pasmore. But I judge by this he will make a name for interiors. It is capitally peopled, too—with children, picking up chips and watching an old man sharpening a saw, and peeping in through windows, stretching up to look through them. I hear it has pleased Henry Phillips, the bass singer, to make one of his pleasant musical entertainments out of my book—for the libretto is as much his as the music—and accordingly he is coming to sing and recite 'Our Village,' and I am going to hear him. Have you read 'Alton Locke'? I have not; nor, although he is almost a neighbour, do I know Mr. Kingsley. His other work, 'The Saint's Tragedy,' was full of power, but painful, disagreeable, and inconclusive; and I think it likely, from all that I hear, that this is the same; although my friend Mr. Pearson, the vicar of Sonning, said to me yesterday that there was in it a startling amount of world-wide truth.

Yours ever most faithfully,

M. R. M.

[This is the last letter from Three Mile Cross. The Court of Chancery refused to repair the cottage. Terms were arranged for the house at Swallowfield, and Miss Mitford removed though late in the autumn to secure a safe shelter for the winter.]

To MRS. JENNINGS, *Portland Place.*

Swallowfield, Dec. 31, 1850.

How glad I am to see your dear handwriting again, dearest Mrs. Jennings, and how much more glad should I be to see yourself! It was a great temptation that which Mrs. Dupuy put in my way, to come to town and go with her to your house on Christmas day. I do quite understand your feelings. A father (and such a father) is a loss never to be replaced; but there is comfort and satisfaction in such a recollection; and even your children will be the better, ay! much the better, for having to look back to such a grandfather, linked to them by such parents. So out of grief springs hope.

Mr Kingsley took me quite by surprise in his extraordinary fascination. I have never seen a man of letters the least like him, for, in general, the *beau-idéal* of a young poet remains a *beau-idéal.* They are mostly middle-aged (sometimes elderly), conceited, affected, foppish, vulgar. Mr. Kingsley is not only a high-bred gentleman, but has the most charming admixture of softness and gentleness, with spirit, manliness, and frankness —a frankness quite transparent—and a cordiality and courtesy that would win any heart. He did win his own sweet wife entirely by this charm of character. She was a girl of family, fortune, fashion, and beauty; he a young curate, without distinction of any sort—without even literary distinction, for he had not then published. He loved her—she loved him; and, without any un-

seemly elopement, they lived down and loved down a pretty strong family opposition, and were married. Since that, Sir John Cope gave him the living of Eversley; and he has won a very high fame, and the love of all his parish and all his neighbourhood. He is quite young; and though, I suppose, he does not generally intend to go fox-hunting, yet it sometimes happens that his horse carries him into the midst of the chase, when he is always in at the death, eager and delighted as a boy. I cannot tell you how much I like him. Miss Bremer was at his house, just before we became acquainted, and he was much pleased with her. She stayed too short a time, or we should have met. He is now engaged upon a work (in 'Fraser') treating of Alexandria in the fifth century—a sort of story like Lockhart's 'Valerius' or Mr. Ware's 'Palmyra'—but he is greatest as a poet. I know nothing more touching than that song in 'Alton Locke.'

I am charmed with my new cottage. The scenery is delightful, and the neighbours most kind and pleasant. Perhaps, when the days get long and the weather fine you will come and see me—won't you? I do hope to get to town in time to see you this year. You know that my last visit was regulated by the arrival of Mrs. Browning.

Yours, attached and affectionate,

M. R. MITFORD.

1851.

To MRS. JENNINGS, *Portland Place.*

Swallowfield, June, 1851.

Thank you most heartily, dearest Mrs. Jennings, for your most kind invitation. But, besides general weakness and debility, which would render the pleasant fatigue of London quite impossible just now, I am so lame that I could no more walk over the Exhibition than I could fly. I do hope to get better of an incapacity which is very painful, but certainly it will take time. Everybody speaks in the same way of that great sight —which is so much more than a sight—and yet I regret more the missing kind and valued friends.

CHAPTER XIII.

Letters for 1852.

To Miss Goldsmid.

Swallowfield, April 12, 1852.

Thank you, most heartily, dear Miss Goldsmid, for Mr. Robertson's admirable lectures. I shall put them in the hands of my friend, Mr. Fields, of Boston, whom I am expecting every day, and who will, I am pretty sure, spread them through America. I agree generally with Mr. Robertson, differing, of course, in some particulars, as all people who think and like and admire for themselves must do and ought to do. But those lectures are the very things that ought to be heard and read; and they will be. I am not one of those who think this age without taste for poetry. Its very richness in graceful verse makes it difficult to attain a reputation—as Rogers did, for instance; but the taste exists in many unsuspected quarters. I have had proofs of this by my own book, if I may venture with you—I think I may—to be so egotistical as to mention it. Ever since it has been published I have had, day by day, letters upon letters, packets upon packets, books upon books, from all parts of the country—remote villages in Wales and Scotland and Ireland—not merely from enthusiastic girls and young poets at Oxford and Cambridge, but from people the most unexpected—

grave old merchants, half ashamed—self-educated men, who toil all day and read and write half the night—and professional men in our great towns, who find relief from their mind-weariness in the soothing delights of poetry. I should be afraid to tell you how many strangers have written to me during the last three months; and I hail it, not merely as a mark of personal kindness to myself, but as a pregnant proof of the interest taken in the main subject of the work. Adieu, dear Miss Goldsmid.

Ever most gratefully and affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. JENNINGS.

Swallowfield, June 1, 1852.

Do, please, send me 'The Laird of Caithness,' and any ballads *you* think good. I can securely trust your taste. I presume my version of 'Bonnie Dundee' to be correct, since it is taken from Scott's own text, in his quite-forgotten or rather never-known play, 'The Doom of Devorgoil,' one of those weak dramas which it seems really incredible that such a poet and such a novelist should have written. The most incredible of all is, that, besides its absolute want of merit, this ballad is introduced as having been written thirty years; and a prior of some monastery is also introduced, as having, about the same period, been driven from his priory by the Reformation, thus making contemporaries of John Knox and Claverhouse!

Another ballad that I have been long in search of is 'We'll gae nae mair a roving,' by James the Fifth of Scotland, called by Scott the best comic ballad in any language. 'The Gaberlunzie Man,' by the same royal author, is in Percy; but the other I can nowhere find,

although I have half a dozen different collections myself, and sent for Chambers' 'Comic Ballads of Scotland,' making sure to find it there.

The Kossuth trait is capital. I hold the man to be a mere adventurer, and one of the worst sort, blowing up strife amongst the nations. Have you any sympathy with Louis Napoleon? I have. Two or three of my friends, who have been in Paris since the autumn—Mrs. Browning for one—say that "the French people have been with him from the first to the last;" and the ability and courage of the man are worthy of his name. In another thing, too, every letter from France is unanimous—that war with England would be most popular with army and with people, whilst we are as unprepared for such a contingency as anything well can be. Well, I hope the primroses will come first, and you with them.

Yes, I delight in Longfellow, especially 'The Golden Legend,' which is full of salt and savour—rich, racy, graphic,—breathing the air of the middle ages, of Gothic architecture, grand cathedrals, quaint German towns. There is an open-air sermon upon bells that one can fancy to have been preached at Paul's Cross before the Reformation; and a scene in the Scriptorium, or rather a soliloquy of an old monk, employed on illuminating a manuscript, that one can really hear and see, it is so true.

Always faithfully and affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. HOARE,* *Monkstown, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, June, 1852.

DEAR MADAM,

Almost every post for the last two or three weeks has brought me two or three letters from persons hitherto unknown to me, and one or two books, many of them of considerable merit. Very few, however, have given me so much pleasure as your amusing and characteristic little work† and your kind letter. Poor Mrs. James Gray interested me much. I have been hoping that my book, which has brought English reprints of Holcroft's Memoirs, and of several other works that I see announced, might have produced a collected edition of her poems; but I suppose the state of Ireland is not favourable to such an enterprise. If you could without much trouble procure for me copies of the poems you mention I should be glad. A few years back there was a great influx of Irish poetry, most of which I possess, but it is now scarce. A friend of mine once ran off with a sixpenny volume of 'Poetry of the Nation,' and has not since been able to find it, either in her husband's fine library in town or at their seat in the country; and this little book I have been unable to replace. Have you read 'The Autobiography of a Working Man?' It is as graphic as Defoe, and with a fine illustration of Burns' 'Cotter's Saturday Night,' in the account the

* Mrs. Hoare, the lady to whom the following letters are addressed, had from childhood been an ardent admirer of Miss Mitford's writings, but was unacquainted with her till the publication of the 'Recollections of a Literary Life.' That book contained a brief notice of Mrs. James Gray, of whose life and writings Mrs. Hoare knew much of which Miss Mitford was ignorant. She therefore ventured to write to her on that subject, and the result was a correspondence which continued till within a short period of Miss Mitford's death.

† A volume of Irish stories.

author gives of the piety of his own family, belonging to the South Highlands.

Ever, dear madam, very faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

Was there anything sudden in poor Mrs. James Gray's death? I thought so from the announcement in the 'Dublin University Magazine.'

To MRS. HOARE, *Monkstown, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, Summer, 1852.

DEAREST MRS. HOARE,

Mr. Macaulay I have not the honour to know; but I agree with you in thinking him at the very head of English literature,—certainly our greatest prose writer (although perhaps John Ruskin may be more eloquent) —almost our greatest *poet*. He is quite as delightful a companion as he is a writer. I am, for my sins, so fidgety respecting style, that I have the bad habit of expecting a book which pretends to be written in our language to be English; therefore I cannot read Miss Strickland, or the Howitts, or Thomas Carlyle, or Emerson, or the serious part of Dickens, although liking very heartily the fun of 'Pickwick.' Some day or other you will yourself become more fastidious; and then you will find excuses for my want of indulgence.

Their wild violets are not sweet. I suspect they call the pansy the violet, since Mr. Bryant somewhere talks of the yellow violet, a phenomenon not known with us. Have you the white wild hyacinth? It makes a charming variety amongst its blue sisters, and is amongst the purest of white flowers, all so pure. A bank close to my little field is rich in both. Have you the frittillaries? They are beautiful in our water meadows, looking like painted glass. Indeed, a young friend of mine in putting up a memorial window after his grandfather's

death, suggested to the artist the use of this beautiful local flower, an idea with which he was charmed. Have you the rarer English orchises—the bee, the fly, the spider, the butterfly, the dead-leaf, the lily of the valley orchis, and the man orchis? They grow on chalky soils amongst beech woods.

As a general rule I may say that through life I have met with singular kindness and sympathy; and I firmly believe that any one pursuing a straightforward course, and not courting the notice of those who are called the upper classes, will always command their respect, and very often their regard.

Adieu, dear friend. Believe me

Ever faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. HOARE, *Monkstown, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, Summer, 1852.

Somewhere or other, dear Mrs. Hoare, I have a letter half written to you, which I could not finish when begun, having been interrupted by a violent attack of fever, above three weeks ago, which has become intermittent. I am, I believe, slowly mending. My excellent little maid, who has every talent except the talent epistolary, is an admirable nurse, and I have a most skilful medical man. Add that this cottage stands under the shadow of superb old trees, oak and elm, upon a scrap of common which catches every breeze; and that I see the coolest of waters from my window, or rather from my bed—and, indeed, this is, they say, the coolest house in the neighbourhood: you will then agree that I have much for which to be thankful. Still it is a depressing sort of illness, and has not been wanting in depressing circumstances.

And so you think a party pamplet will make me

change my mind about Louis Napoleon! Before my illness I saw from twenty to thirty people who had spent the winter at Paris, many who had been living there for years. They all laugh at the nice English prejudices against a man whose popularity in his own country is as great as ever was enjoyed by man. Look at the price of stocks; the only real fact which appears about France in the English press. During my illness I have been reading his own works, in French of course; and the deep interest inspired by the beautiful writing of those three volumes is greater than I can describe. Many of the persons whom I saw had seen much of him. One had been over the rooms just made ready for him at St. Cloud. Their taste and simplicity, the manly absence of finery, is said to be most indicative of character.

Adieu! This is the longest letter I have written.

M. R. M.

To MRS. HOARE, *Monkstown.*

Swallowfield, Summer, 1852.

MY DEAR MRS. HOARE,

I think you had been reading Margaret Fuller's life—a strange, wild woman, who was, they say, insupportable at Boston, but became better at New York, where she was treated only as a lion; better still at Paris, where she knew little French; still softer in England, where she was talked over by Carlyle; and really good and interesting in Italy, where the woman took completely the place of the sybil. Some American friends who were here on Friday knew her well. They were disgusted by her conceit and arrogance and affectation; but spoke of her purity, her strong sense of duty, and her general powers. One had read in America that letter which contained her adventures when lost in Scotland; all had heard of her admirable conduct in the

hospitals at Rome. A curious story was told to them of Ossoli by the sculptor himself who figures in it. Margaret went to an eminent sculptor, and said that Ossoli had much time and much taste for his art, would he admit him to his studio? "Certainly," replied the artist, and questioned Ossoli on his vocation. He said if he had any taste or talent it was for sculpture; and a foot for a model with proper clay was put into his hands. A fortnight after Ossoli brought back the model and his copy, in which the great toe was placed on the wrong side of the foot!

Can you tell me where to find the line

"A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind?"

All America is looking for it. Adieu, dear Mrs. Hoare.

Ever very faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. HOARE, *Monkstown.*

Swallowfield, Autumn, 1852.

Did I tell you that Mr. Fields expects to bring Mr. Hawthorne to England with him in the spring? And did I also say that the last act of my excellent friend, before leaving England, was to carry to Mr. De Quincey, in Scotland, the author's profits of the seven volumes of his collected works, which he (Mr. Fields) had collected with so much care and pains, and edited himself? This piece of generosity, unprecedented in any publisher, English or American, gave great pleasure to the "Opium Eater," whom Mr. Fields describes as the most courtly gentleman that he has seen in Europe.

Adieu, dear Mrs. Hoare. Forgive me if I be long silent. They scold me for writing.

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To MRS. JENNINGS.

Swallowfield, July 30, 1852.

I heartily agree in the wisdom of your theory of education. I know now a little boy of seven (only son of a near neighbour) speaking four or five languages, far advanced in Greek, with Latin in proportion; but oh! the pale, sickly child! His mother, a very clever woman, is proud of this boy, and seems to me blind to the small chance of rearing him, in the first place; and to the great probability that this precocious intellect will be far inferior, at seven-and-twenty, to your boys, who are developing their physical powers in the hay-field and on the Welsh mountains, and who will learn healthily and rapidly when the time comes.

I have been reading Edgar Poe's Tales and Poems—very remarkable; and am just now trying to get over the painfulness of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' Have you read it? It is a negro story, and certainly there is much humour and much pathos; but the question, as regards America, must have two sides, when Daniel Webster, the wisest of her statesmen, has forfeited his presidentship, and risked his popularity, rather than join the Abolitionists, at a certainty of a disruption of the Union.

Adieu, dearest friend. Say everything for me to Mr. Jennings.

Ever faithfully yours,
M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS GOLDSMID.

Swallowfield, Summer, 1852.

Ah! dearest Miss Goldsmid, how can I ever thank you and dear Lady Goldsmid half enough for your exquisite kindness! and how I wish that I could by any

chance profit by it! But although quite as cheerful as ever, the very good spirits, which have been the support and solace of my life, are now a danger, for they excite and exhaust me; and, if I be more than four or five hours in company—especially the company I like best—I never close my eyes all night, and am almost as ill as ever next day. But this dream of coming near you seems too good to happen. Mr. May dislikes my seeing anybody; and I must be better, than I fear is likely, to be able to realize such a hope. Nevertheless, I cannot quite give it up; but if I can come I will write again.

I am so very sorry to hear of Sir Isaac's illness; he seemed so full of life, so young in mind and body, that one cannot bear to think of him as an invalid and an object of anxiety to that large and happy family who spread such sunshine around them. I have never forgotten the sight of Lady Goldsmid (that impersonation of all that is womanly and motherly) in the midst of her children and grandchildren. Remember me to her, and to all who are so kind as to think of me, most gratefully.

Ever, dear Miss Goldsmid,

Most affectionately and faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS GOLDSMID, *Summerhill, Tonbridge.*

Swallowfield, August, 1852.

A week before receiving your kind note, dearest Miss Goldsmid, I had myself found the line* in Garrick's Epilogue. Yet I was glad of your letter, because although Mr. Fields has no doubt about the matter, Mr. Harness seems to think it a quotation. Indeed, except Mr. Harness, I have found nobody to

* "A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind."

doubt, and his is a vague suspicion without any indication of another habitat for the flower. By-the-way, this most dear friend of mine has been here for ten days—came here for one—found himself a lodging—has stayed ever since, and will stay ten days longer. Did you ever hear of him? He is one of the finest preachers in London, but still better known as the friend of all that has been eminent for the last forty years, for from the moment he left college he took rank as one of the best conversationalists of the day. Schoolfellow and correspondent of Byron, he refused the dedication of "Childe Harold;" was the bosom friend and literary executor of Thomas Hope; and has lived in the closest intimacy with every person who combined high talent with fair character. It is to the honour of the highest part of the aristocracy, the Lord Lansdownes and Lord Derbys, that he has invitations to dinner amongst them every day through the season, and very many to great country houses. Certainly he is the most charming person that ever trod the earth, and as good as he is charming. He has every grace and accomplishment; person (even at sixty years old), voice, manner, talent, literature, and more than all, the sweetest of natures. His father gave away my mother. We were close friends in childhood, and have remained such ever since; and now he leaves the Deepdene, with all its beauty of scenery and society, to come to me, a poor sick old woman, just because I am sick and old and poor, and because we have loved each other like brother and sister all our lives. How I wish you were here to hear him read Shakespeare—far above any acting—and to listen to conversation that leaves his reading far behind.

Poor Margaret Fuller! The deeper tragedies are the true ones; and I know no one sadder than hers.

Women of genius make great mistakes in choosing husbands, and she seems to have been one. An American friend told me the other day a curious trait of Daniel Webster, which has made his fish-propensity very diverting to his countrymen. His passion for fish, in every way—to catch, and to cook, and to eat—is something fabulous. It is an epoch in an American's life to eat fish chowda (a soup composed of cod and other ingredients) at Marshfield; and whatever be the rank of the guests, the great statesman leaves them, to compound the dainty with his own hands, asserting that no woman that was ever born can hit the exact proportions.

Oh! dearest Miss Goldsmid, what a pedigree for Summerhill! But how could the woman, who had been the wife of *that* Lord Essex, ever marry again? He has always been amongst my pet heroes in history. One even overlooks his flattery of that odious queen for the sake of his chivalry of character, and for a largeness and tolerance far rarer in that age than any knighlty quality. What a combination of temptations to visit you!—you and Lady Goldsmid, and the house, that comes so near to the highest tragedy in Lord Essex, and the highest comedy, in the 'Mémoires de Grammont!' I am afraid that I care less for the associations of Penshurst, although I do care for them also. Oh! I must come next year.

Since you do not mention Sir Isaac's health, I trust that he is improving. All health and happiness to you all.

Ever, dearest Miss Goldsmid,

Most gratefully and affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To Miss Goldsmid, *Summerhill, Tonbridge.*

Swallowfield, Sept. 1852.

Dearest Miss Goldsmid,

If we had met this year, I should have ventured to tell you that the copy of your translation of Dr. Solomon's Sermons never reached me. Why I name this now is, because after preaching one of his own fine sermons Friday week, Mr. Harness read me in the evening one of yours, and expressed himself so delighted with its spirit and with its English (which he said he could hardly believe a translation) as to desire of all things to possess the volume. He even, upon my telling him it was not to be purchased, requested me to beg one for him of your own dear self. I wish you had heard all he said. He went on to speak of Jewish literature—of the high and deep interest attached to the Hebrew religion—and to the want of a clear English version of the Old Testament by a Jew. He said that he himself possessed two, if not three, which professed to be such; but that they were founded on the English translation—I mean the authorized Church of England translation—with variations, instead of being newly executed throughout; and that the effect was rather to produce confusion in the familiar version than to convey the exact impression entertained by the chosen people of their own sacred books. He said that a translation of the Bible, according to the Hebrew faith, executed in the manner of Dr. Solomon's sermons, would be a very precious contribution to English theology. I wish you had heard him.

I have been poorly during the last week. That low fever hangs about me, and will not go. I shall certainly read Dumas; Cuvier's fine work I have read. Adieu.

Ever most affectionately yours,

M. R. M.

To MRS. HOARE, *Monkstown, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, Autumn, 1852.

I have been reading your book with great attention. It has about it unmistakable truth, a quality rare among modern Irish works—I mean, the works of living Irish writers. An Englishman feels it difficult to realize the terrible trials of those famine years. We hear of starvation as of a town taken by storm—an evil remote and all but impossible. It must have been a most painful trial of fortitude to witness such misery and to be only able to alleviate it here and there. Even now, how strange is the state of Ireland! How little any one seems to know how to deal with those frightful murders of landlord and agent which prevent the introduction of capital and the stimulus to labour—to self-support and self-reliance, which seem the master want of your people—a people who, in other lands, come out in healthy strength, and in their own country are elements of danger and of weakness.

In your graphic description of the grounds of an old house, you talk of the *pink* harebell as a wild flower. We have the harebell in heathy lands, *blue*, sometimes *white* as a cultivated flower, but *pink* I have never seen it.

Be sure, dear Mrs. Hoare, that I have no political sympathy with the poets of the 'Nation;' but they were full of *verve*, and (speaking as an Englishwoman, and, therefore, perhaps, ignorantly) I should have been glad if such men as John Mitchell, and Smith O'Brien, and young Meagher, above all, had been suffered, after sentence, to expiate their crime by exile in America, rather than by being sent as convicts to a penal colony. They would have been quite forgotten there.

May every happiness be with you!

Faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. HOARE, *Monkstown, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, Autumn, 1852.

Thank you, my dearest Mrs. Hoare, for the touching French verses, and the touching English prose story. All dogs follow me too! It is strange. I have one here, a young retriever called Seal, really belonging to a son of my kind neighbour, Sir Henry Russell, but who has adopted me. I suppose when he comes to be old enough to go a-shooting that he will discover that I am no sportswoman, but at present he sticks to my skirts (he's just like a shaggy young bear) and won't go away. I like him, and he knows it. Fanchon holds him in high scorn, and he returns the compliment. Thanks for the bog-myrtle; it is still fragrant; but of all fragrance that of the night-scented orchis you mention is most exquisite. The wild hyacinth, dear Mrs. Hoare, differs much from the flower which we call the harebell in England: a small campanula, bearing two or three exquisite, thin, bell-like papery flowers (you can hear them rustle when shaken) on a very thin and fragile stalk, growing among wild thyme, and under heather, in the month of August. There is a white variety cultivated in gardens, but no pink one. I have heard both the harebell and the wild hyacinth called blue-bells. As to botany, my knowledge is very scanty; I, like you, love flowers for their beauty and their odour. Adieu, dear friend.

Ever very gratefully and faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. HOARE, *Monkstown, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, Autumn, 1852.

Your admiration of Jane Austen is so far from being a heresy, that I never met any high literary people in my life who did not prefer her to any female prose writer. The only dissent I ever heard was from one very clever man, who stood up for the 'Simple Story' as still finer; but then that was only one novel, and only the first half of that. For my own part, I delight in her, and really cannot read the present race of novel-writers —although my old friend Mrs. Trollope, in spite of her terrible coarseness, has certainly done two or three marvellously clever things. She was brought up within three miles of this house, being the daughter of a former vicar of Heckfield, and is, in spite of her works, a most elegant and agreeable woman. I have known her these fifty years; she must be turned of seventy, and is wonderful for energy of mind and body. Her story is very curious; put me in mind to tell it you. She used to be such a Radical that her house in London was a perfect emporium of escaped state criminals. I remember asking her at one of her parties how many of her guests would have been shot or guillotined if they had remained in their own country.

Yes, I ought to have liked Shelley better. But I have a love of clearness—a perfect hatred of all that is vague and obscure—and I still think, with the grand exception of the 'Cenci,' and of a few of the shorter poems, that there was rather the making of a great poet, if he had been spared, than the actual accomplishment of any great work. It was an immense promise.

I have been hearing a most curious detail of the man who perpetrated the forgery of the Shelley letters. My

friend Mr. Bennett, besides being a very pleasing poet, is an eminent jeweller and watchmaker. Two or three years ago a person calling himself a natural son of Lord Byron presented himself at his shop, and desired to have a locket constructed for three curls, cut, he said, from his father's head at different ages (I dare say the curls were hair forgeries—cut from wigs). He gave much trouble about this locket, and called often, and at last invited Mr. Bennett to accompany him home to inspect a collection of drawings, portraits, and MSS. of various sorts, which he had been many years getting together for the purpose of a grand illustrated life of Lord Byron. Mr. Bennett says there was a whole chest full of drawings, prints, and MSS.; portraits of all his friends; engravings of all the houses, and even the Italian towns, in which Byron had lived; above all, bundles of letters—fifty at least—of different hand-writings, different ages, on various papers, with various postmarks, some well preserved, some tattered and torn. They would have deceived anybody, and doubtless contained amongst them those which did deceive book-sellers, publishers, autograph collectors, and autograph auctioneers. Besides this collection there was a most elegant young woman, whom he introduced as his wife —of course the negotiatrix of the forgeries. It is now thought that they were not married; but she was certainly educated at a great finishing school at Blackheath.

The conclusion of the adventure is characteristic: he ran up a bill of from thirty to forty pounds, and was heard of no more. One curious thing in this is the way in which the old designation of "bastard" is becoming a title again, as in the days of Dunois. Half a dozen people lay claim to the honour of belonging in

that way to the Emperor Napoleon—Emile de Girardin being one. This man was like enough to Lord Byron to justify the claim.

Yes, I like the 'Blackwood' review. I seldom see critiques on myself—never, unless somebody sends them. Adieu, dearest Mrs. Hoare.

Ever faithfully yours,

M. R. M.

To MRS. HOARE, *Monkstown, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, Autumn, 1852.

DEAREST MRS. HOARE,

Did you see Mrs. Browning? She is gone first to Paris and then on to Italy, and is sorely afraid that they will not let her in at Florence, where one wing of the 'Casa Guidi' is full of their furniture. For my part, I think the danger is rather that they may put her in prison and keep her there. She is suffering from a return of cough, and so is Mrs. Southey. Indeed, with us the autumn has been so unusually cold that the oldest people hardly remember so many leaves gone at this time of year—more than in December last year. An odd circumstance is that the oak-leaves this year are falling as soon as those of the elm. Nothing can exceed our verdure always. The grass of Swallowfield Park and of Strathfieldsaye is like an emerald in any season. I once lived for a twelvemonth on the exquisite coast of the south of England, on the borders of Dorset and Devonshire, and have been by the sea in Northumberland, the Isle of Wight, and other parts. I feel its grandeur, but I like inland scenery better, especially forest scenery. My passion is trees, and our lanes and woodland commons are unrivalled.

Mr. Thompson, one of the principal American artists,

spent a day here last month, and has promised me a portrait of Louis Napoleon—a gift indeed! I have four memoirs of him, each with a print, and all his works. What a man he is! The only really great man now living, or who has lived (except, perhaps, Sir Robert) since the glorious Emperor. I have just parted from a young man, high Tory, who was with a Legitimist family making the tour of the south of France at the same time with the Prince. They stood, in dead silence, in a garden in Montpelier to witness his entrance; but he says that the reality of his popularity can no more be questioned than the splendour of his genius. Certainly the Bordeaux speech is magnificent. I have read Victor Hugo's book. It is impossible that the odious falsehoods and the want of logic could have been surpassed.

This is half a dozen letters in one.

Yours ever,
M. R. M.

TO THE AUTHORESS OF 'OUR VILLAGE.'

The single eye; the daughter of the light,
  Well pleased to recognise in lowliest shade
  Each glimmer of its parent ray, and made,
By daily draughts of brightness, inly bright;
The style severe, yet graceful, trained aright
  To classic depths of clearness and repaid
  By thanks and honour from the wise and staid;
By pleasant skill to blame and yet delight,
  And hold communion with the eloquent throng
  Of those who shaped and toned our speech and song;
All these are yours. The same examples here
You in rich woodland, me on breezy moor,
  With kindred aims the same sweet paths along,
To knit in loving knowledge rich and poor.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

Eversley, Oct. 25, 1852.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *Kensington Gore.*

Swallowfield, Nov. 10, 1852.

Thank you a thousand times, dear friend, for your most kind and tempting invitation; but although much better, I cannot help feeling that a very little exertion and excitement would overset me.

I have heard often from M—— S—— lately, and I know no part of her letters that gave me greater pleasure than when, speaking of Windsor Castle, she said, "and with seven children, there is at least plenty of noise;" it sounded quite homely and hearty, for a palace.

The people are crazy about 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' I read about a hundred pages, and found the book so painful, that I put it down, and certainly am not likely to take it up again. It is one-sided, exaggerated, false—with some cleverness, but of a very disagreeable kind. Nevertheless, if there had been the great literary merit they talk of I think I should have gone on. My belief is, that the *de*-merits of the book have more to do with its popularity than any sort of excellence; the cant about slavery being a good cry—such as we English love to get up on certain subjects—against the Emperors, for instance, uncle and nephew, or against the Pope. After all, how little has this sort of immediate popularity to do with lasting reputation! Look at the great novelists of the day, Dickens and Thackeray (although it is some injustice to Thackeray to class them together, for he can write good English when he chooses, and produce a striking and consistent character); but look at their books, so thoroughly false and unhealthy in different ways; Thackeray's so world-stained and so cynical, Dickens's so meretricious in sentiment and so

full of caricature. Compare them with Scott and Miss Austen, and then say if they can live. Neither of them can produce an intelligent, right-minded, straightforward woman, such as one sees every day; and a love story from Thackeray could hardly fail to be an abomination.

Have you read Mr. Kingsley's 'Phaeton?' A dialogue in the manner of Plato—or rather a dialogue within a dialogue. There is the usual inconclusiveness; but yet one gathers much good; warnings not to let the love of nature degenerate into an exclusive worship, to the neglect of the Creator; and injunctions to seek the faith of the Low Church, without the narrowness. Perhaps I like this pamphlet the better because I so entirely like the author. He spent one of these wet mornings with me, and is certainly one of the most charming persons in the world. You must meet. He was so sorry to have missed you! He is not a bit like an author—only a frank, charming, genial young man. Then I have had all manner of visitors spending the day here; Bayard Taylor, the American traveller, Agnes Niven and Miss Denman. By-the-way Miss Denman has the ladies' college mania! The more I hear of it, the more I dislike it.—I shall do nothing for it.—I should not, even if I did not wish to help the dear Russells with the Swallowfield schools.—The college being a device for the promotion of governesses, of whom, poor things, there are already too many.

Poor Daniel Webster! Mr. Fields wrote to me whilst the mourning guns were booming over the harbour. He says that, never since Washington, has America had such a loss, and that everybody is lamenting his death, as if he were a near friend. I have had quantities of papers

and letters from America, where the grief for that great man seems to have been wonderfully real, and the funeral admirable in its simplicity. I don't think any of the English papers have said that he was buried in full dress, like Napoleon—a blue coat and white cravat, waistcoat, trousers, and gloves. Everett's speech was very fine; and so are some of the poems. They have reprinted my paper on him in almost every journal in the States. Love to all.

Ever faithfully yours,

M. R. M.

To MISS GOLDSMID, *Regent's Park.*

Swallowfield, Dec. 1, 1852.

How good and kind you are, dearest Miss Goldsmid, to think of me so often and to write to me so kindly, in the midst of your numerous claims. Be quite sure that no one can be more grateful for such goodness, or can sympathise more sincerely in your anxiety respecting the niece, who can hardly be called motherless, when she has such an aunt as you to supply the place of her lost parent. May she reward your cares and affections! It is a charming age, just like those days of early June (the May of the old poets) when flower and foliage, light air and bright sunbeam come upon us in the loveliest union of summer and of spring. To look upon a fresh and innocent girl at that happy age is to feel one's own heart grow younger.

Have you read Haydon's life? The family wished me to edit it; but I felt that it would be a most difficult task; that he would write much which must be painful to others, and much about himself which no friend could wish published. Whenever he put his own

portrait into one of his pictures he always so exaggerated the points he thought good, as to turn them almost into deformities; and of course he would do the same in pen and ink. So I declined it, and Mr. Tom Taylor has done it (I am told, for I have not seen the work) much better than I could have hoped to do. He was a most brilliant talker—racy, bold, original, and vigorous; and his early pictures were full of promise; but a vanity, that amounted to self-idolatry, and a terrible carelessness, unjustifiable in many matters, degraded his mind, and even impaired his talent in art.

For my own part, I am convinced that without pains there will be no really good writing. I find the most successful writers the most careful. I am still so difficult to satisfy, that I have written a long preface (it will run, I think, to thirty or forty pages,) to the dramatic works three times over, many parts far more than three times; and I can foresee that there will still be much to do when the pages go through my hands.

The success of poor Haydon's Life has induced a design to publish his letters; and as I was perhaps his most constant correspondent—the one to whom he wrote most freely—I have been hunting up his letters through five boxes, trunks, and portmanteaus, two huge hampers—baskets innumerable—and half a dozen great drawers! Imagine the job! And, dear friend, think of the emotions recalled by the letters of fifty years, from so many whom I have loved and lost!

If you know of any one who wants a thoroughly good and charming young woman as a companion I can most thoroughly recommend poor Miss Haydon. She is now teaching as a daily governess. She is very accomplished and intelligent, and has learnt truth and

goodness from her many trials. Adieu, dearest Miss Goldsmidt.

Ever most affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS GOLDSMID, *Summerhill, Tonbridge.*

Swallowfield [no date, 1852].

I rejoice to hear good news of you all, dearest Miss Goldsmid; and I answer at once, lest, being just now overwhelmed with double work of correcting the sheets of one book, and writing another, I should delay too long. You will pardon a brief and unworthy letter.

I know that you would like poor Haydon's Life; and I heartily agree with you that the home-test is the true test, and that his domestic affections might have redeemed him much. If you had known him personally, his great power of conversation and constant life of mind would have carried you away. He was a sort of Benvenuto Cellini; or rather he was like Shakespeare's description of the Dauphin's horse—"all air and fire—the duller elements of earth and water never appeared in him." Anything so rapid, so brilliant, so vigorous as his talk, I have never known. His letters give some notion of that, and I suppose they will appear soon. I sent sixty-five—some of them very long—to Messrs. Longman, the other day, without reading them, having been nearly blinded in the search through the terrible masses of my correspondence. He was just as loyal to the few whom he really called friends as to his family. You remember his sending some papers to Mrs. Browning (then Miss Barrett) to be taken care of, a few days before his death. Well, he had painted a portrait of me, far bigger than life, and with equal

excess of colour, but otherwise like. My father, however, had not praised it enough to please him. His nice taste had found that he disliked it. So it had been kept by the artist, and he had cut out the head. This head was amongst the things sent to Miss Barrett. He gave it to her, he said, because he knew she would value it. The next day he called again in Wimpole Street, to say that he could not part with that portrait, he would only lend it to her. This was three days before his death. You may imagine how it touched me when I heard of it. By-the-way, I find this morning that this portrait, now in the possession of his and my friend Mr. Barrett, is about to be engraved for the Tragedies.

Say everything for me to dear Lady Goldsmid.

Ever, dearest friend,

Very faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *Kensington Gore.*

Swallowfield, Dec. 24, 1852.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Lest you should hear some imperfect or exaggerated account, it seems better that I should tell you that last Monday I had a serious accident—an overturn in dear Lady Russell's park. I was thrown, with great violence, upon the hard road. No bones are broken; and the head, I thank God, is quite untouched; but the nerves of the left side, that which is called the circular nerve round the shoulder bone, and the principal nerves of the hip and thigh are severely bruised, so that my arm is bound to my body, and I have not the slightest power of moving except when lifted. Poor K——'s situation, and the absence of all nurses or helps of any sort

in this place, adds to our evil condition. However, Sam is a host in himself; and we must do as well as we can. Dear Lady Russell is all that is kind, and Mr. May all that is skilful; though, as he is tiring eight horses a day in the sickly season, I can't expect to see much of him.

Don't come down, dear friend—at least till we get a little round. There is no danger, and the untidyness, which we cannot help, would drive any body accustomed to Christian-like ways, crazy—and then drive me crazy through sympathy. The chief thing to blame was an awkward gate in the park—that beyond the bridge.

Did I tell you that Bentley is most desirous of getting me to give him another series of my 'Recollections?' I have been looking at Eugene Sue's 'Mystères du Peuple,' a weak book, but curious, as making angels of everybody *behind* a barricade, and devils of those before them; treating the reds in France just as Mrs. Stowe treats the blacks in America. It would make a good paper, to review the two works from that point of view. Adieu, dear friend. Love to all.

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

CHAPTER XIV.

LETTERS FOR 1853.

To the REV. HUGH PEARSON,* *Sonning.*

New Year's Day, 1853.

I THANK you, dearest Mr. Pearson, for your most kind note. I know you will come and see me when you can, just as you would any other poor old woman in similar plight, or rather sooner; because you can do me more good.

So you really like 'Esmond.' But I cannot quarrel with one of the things that I love best in you—the faculty of finding, in every thing, all that there is to like. For my part, I thought it painful, and unpleasant, and false—I mean the love story; and which, I suppose, is still worse in a novel, tedious and long. I demur, too, to much of the criticism. Did you ever observe how much Macaulay has studied Bolingbroke? But the modern author has the great fault of constantly drawing attention to his style. We are always thinking, How brilliant! Whereas, in reading his far greater predecessor, one never stops to exclaim and admire, the medium is so pellucid that we see straight to the thought. The words and their arrangement are so exquisite, that it seems as if no other were possible. No:

* The Rev. Hugh Pearson was preferred in 1841 to the Rectory of Sonning. A kindred taste for literature attracted him to Miss Mitford, and he became one of her most valued friends.

I cannot take pleasure in modern English novels. Luckily, we have French ones, and although Balzac be gone, we have Dumas in his place. I was pleased and surprised to find him, Dumas, in the midst of such depreciation of Casimir Delavigne (according to the old quarrel of classic and romantic), quoting those charming ballads, which I have been collecting for two or three years past, and of which not one half are published in his Poesies. Do you know them? They are worth all Lamartine and Alfred de Vigny, and almost all of Victor Hugo.

Adieu, dear friend. I am going on very well, and am quite a pattern of quietness and obedience.

Always affectionately yours. All happiness to you and yours.

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. JENNINGS, *Portland Place.*

Swallowfield, Jan. 3, 1853.

All that love story in 'Esmond' is detestable; and, which is still worse, the book seems to me long and tedious. A clever young man, writing to me about it from Trinity College, Cambridge, said; "I took it with me into the Theological Hall, and listened to the Professor by preference." I dare say he did. Then I demur to the criticism,—holding with Hazlitt, that Steele is worth twenty Addisons. And he underrates Bolingbroke (of course I am not speaking of his infidelity, but of his style); as a prose writer he was one of the greatest of his day.

You are quite right about the 'Blithedale Romance.' Hawthorne is writing another, which I hope will redeem his reputation. I had the pleasure of sending him word a month ago of a Russian translation of the 'House of

the Seven Gables.' Mrs. Stowe, from the poorest of the poor, is become quite a millionaire, having purchased a fine house and grounds with part of her book money. She, too, is at work on another tale. I never read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' having stopped short at a hundred pages. They were so painful, so unpleasant, so exaggerated, and so sure to injure their own cause, that I had no taste for the matter. That slavery is the great difficulty of a great nation, and it must not be treated by appeals to the passions. Mr. Bentley is pressing me of all things for another series. If it please God that I recover, I suppose I must try. I knew you would come round to Louis Napoleon—the only great man since his uncle. How graciously and gratefully he does everything and says everything. Adieu, dear friend. I am going on well.

Ever affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

I send you the best poem I have seen on the death of the Duke. The new Duke has not yet signed his title; he still writes "Douro"—rather a good sign.

To MISS GOLDSMID, *Summerhill, Tonbridge.*

Swallowfield, Jan. 4, 1853.

No; I have not yet read the 'Life and Letters of Thomas Moore.' Very many years ago I used to see much of him in a house which gathered together all that was best of the great Whig party—Mr. Perry's, the editor and proprietor of the 'Morning Chronicle;' a man so genial and so accomplished, that, even when Erskine and Romilly and Tierney and Moore were present, he was the most charming talker at his own table. I saw Mr. Moore many years afterwards at Mr.

Walter's of the 'Times.' Such a contrast! I am speaking of old Mr. Walter—the shyest and awkwardest of men—who could not bear to hear the slightest allusion to the journal from which he derived both his fortune and his fame. The poet had arrived with Mr. Barnes, the editor, and put his host and his introducer into an agony by talking all through the dinner as frankly of the 'Times' as he used to do at Mr. Perry's of the 'Chronicle.' It was a most amusing scene; and I think when I enlightened him upon the subject he was very glad of the mistake he had made. "They deserve it," said he to me, "for being ashamed of what, rightly conducted, would be an honour." Two or three months afterwards the paper had turned completely round.

I am reading Alexandre Dumas—I mean his 'Mémoires.' He is a strange, outspoken man, giving things their coarsest names, as our authors did in the Augustan age of Queen Anne; but the book is exceedingly amusing, and full of curious revelations. There is all the history of Marie-Stella, who pretended to be—perhaps was—changed for Louis Philippe. She, after marrying Lord Newborough, married, after his death, a Baron de Sternberg, and died in Paris, leaving many children by her first and one son by her second husband. Now this summer I have had several letters (about my own last work) from a Baroness de Sternberg, who dates from Belsfield, Windermere — most likely the wife, or widow, of this son.

I continue much as when I wrote; my arm still confined, and no power of the lower limbs; but I think I mend a little. Heaven bless you!

Ever gratefully yours,

M. R. M.

P.S.—I had a letter to-day from an intimate friend of old Mr. Croker, who says that he (Croker) is reading 'Moore's Life' with huge delight. According to one's knowledge of the man, I should think that, in some future volume, Mr. Croker may chance to light upon something which will lessen the enchantment he now feels; unless, indeed, Lord John should pursue in literature, as in politics, the old Whiggish policy of treating his enemies better than his friends.

To the Rev. William Harness, *Kensington Gore.*

Swallowfield, Jan. 1853.

My dear Friend,

I can quite conceive your tribulation amongst Christmas trees and enthusiastic Tennysonians. Even in my youth I always detested the noise and nonsense of Christmas parties—a noise which, in my mind, whilst pretending to be gay but really killing all honest cheerfulness, makes me melancholy; and which is not improved by the dash of German sentimentality hanging, amongst other cloying tinsel, on the branches of the Christmas tree.

As to the adorers of Alfred Tennyson, they unluckily haunt one at all seasons. I am well used to such speeches. Mrs. Browning used to say things very like it about her own poetry. I like some of Alfred Tennyson's earlier poems; but I confess that I like them much less since all these pretended enthusiasts have made such a cry of him.

I have had a magnificent packet of portraits and autographs from America—a view of the house inhabited by Professor Longfellow, formerly Washington's head-quarters. Mr. Fields makes very light of this munificent present; but I am enchanted. What is

very curious is, that the portrait of David Webster (the brother) is far more like Daniel than the one which bears the name of the great statesman. Mr. Fields says that he must know you when he returns to England.

I suppose I must look about for a garden-chair upon springs, easy and strong, that Sam may draw me about. It will not be thrown away; because, if I do my book, I shall like to write out of doors in the spring and summer, and Sam could deposit me in it, in the copse or under a tree, without danger of chill. As yet I have seen nobody except Mr. May and the Russells. How Lady Russell contrives to wade through the dirt I can't imagine, and it rains every day. *We* have had no damp; but I fear that her side of Swallowfield must feel the constant inundations. One stream overflows one day and subsides another, the flood never staying. Ours is the Whitewater, theirs is the Blackwater, which rests upon the ground.

Did I tell you that Miss Goldsmid writes me word that the Jews are now pretty sure to get into Parliament! Several circumstances have combined, especially the death of the Duke and the new ministry. I forget whether you are for or against. I, for my part, think that every one has a claim to the enjoyment of civil rights, were he Hindoo or Mahomedan; and I shall be very glad that poor Sir Isaac, who has been the real worker of the movement, should live to see it accomplished. The very prospect has revived him greatly.

I had a long letter to-day from John Ruskin, who is in the Highlands with two young friends, the pre-Raphaelite painter and his brother, and his own beautiful wife. They are living in a hut on the borders of Loch Achray, playing at cottagers, as rich people like to do. His new volume of the 'The Stones'

is most beautiful. I am expecting Hawthorne in a week or two—his first visit out of Liverpool.

Adieu, my very dear friend. Say everything for me to your dear people, and *be sure to send back the ballads*, with the cheque.*

Ever most affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *Kensington Gore.*

Swallowfield, Feb. 25, 1853.

I rejoice to hear of you, my dear friend, although the news be not so good as I could wish. I do trust that when the thaw really comes (here it has frozen again) your cough will disappear and your voice return. For my part, about a month ago I was getting on favourably—that is to say, I could just stand upon both feet for half a minute and drag one foot after the other for a yard or two by way of walking; but the moment the cold came the helplessness returned just as bad as at first, and the pain far worse.

Don't you like the Emperor's marriage? I shall transcribe for you part of a letter which I have just received from Mrs. Browning at Florence. She says: "I wonder if the Empress pleases you as well as the Emperor! I approve altogether—and none the less, that he has offended Austria in the mode of announcement. Every cut of the whip on the face of Austria is an especial compliment to me, or so I feel it. Let him lead the Democracy to do its duty to the world, and use, to the utmost, his great opportunities. Mr. Cobden and the Peace Society are pleasing me infinitely just now, in making head against the immorality (that's the word) of the English press. The

* For the pension which Mr. H. received for her.

tone taken up towards France is immoral in the highest degree, and the invasion cry would be idiotic if it were not something worse. The Empress, I heard the other day from high authority, is charming and good at heart. She was educated at a respectable school at Bristol, and is very English—which does not prevent her shooting with pistols, leaping gates, driving four-in-hand and upsetting the carriage when the frolic requires it—as brave as a lion and as true as a dog. Her complexion is like marble, white and pale and pure—her hair light, rather sandy ;—they say she powders it with gold dust for effect. But her beauty is less physical and more intellectual than is generally supposed. She is a woman of very decided opinions. I like all this, don't you ? And I liked her letter to the Préfet as everybody must. Ah ! if the English press were sincere in its love of liberty there would be something to say for our poor trampled-down Italy—much to say, I mean. Under my eyes is a country really oppressed—really groaning its heart out; but those things are spoken of with measure." So far Mrs. Browning. I hear from Paris that young Alexandre Dumas (a thorough *mauvais sujet*) is one of the slanderers taken up for libel, and that Lamartine is completely ruined. Mrs. George Dering saw the other day, at Mr. Huddlestone's, a portrait of the Empress on horseback. You know, I suppose, that Mr. Huddlestone was desperately in love with her in Spain—followed her to France—was called home by his father's illness, and, after that father's death, was just about to return to Paris to lay himself and his forty thousand pounds a year at her feet; when the Emperor stepped in and carried off the prize. You have probably seen the enclosed curious instance of

figures turning into a word, and that word into a prophecy, but I send it upon the chance.*

I am so glad you have had your charming niece with you. Say everything for me to all your dear people.

Ever most affectionately and gratefully yours,

M. R. M.

To MRS. HOARE, *Monkstown, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, Spring, 1853.

Forgive me my silence, dearest Mrs. Hoare. Ah! if I be to write another book, as everybody tells me, it must be at the expense of very long silences to those whom I value most. But my late remissness in answering your letter has arisen partly from illness, which still continues—partly from one of the most fatiguing trials which an invalid can undergo, sitting for a portrait. Mr. Bentley has set his heart upon a portrait of me, as I am, to put side by side with a little miniature which was taken when I was between three and four years old. Mr. Lucas, an excellent painter of female portraits, and one of the most charming persons in the world, has had the infinite kindness to come down here and paint me. His picture is now in the engraver's hands. As a work of art it is absolutely marvellous —literal, as a likeness, in feature and complexion, but wonderful in the expression—so like, yet so idealized that I think it shows me as I never do look, but yet

* *Note by M. R. M.*—The numbers for the election of President of France in favour of Louis Napoleon were:

For.	Against.
7119791	1119.

Look through the back of this against the candle, or the fire, or any light.

as, by some strange possibility, I may have looked. I am a very cheerful person; and any vulgar artist—any artist but John Lucas—would have fallen into the trap of giving an animated look to the picture, which, in an ugly old woman, would have been hideous. The present expression—*his* expression—is thoughtful, happy, tender—as if the mind were dwelling in a pleasant frame on some dear friend. I doubt if any skill can transfer that evanescent and ideal look to the steel;—the likeness of form, which is as striking as a looking-glass, the engraver will of course translate. Two hideous caricatures of me (not meant as such, for they are appended to flattering memoirs) arrived, to our great amusement, whilst my friend the artist was here. One is distinguished by a mass of coal-black hair and a cocked-up nose—my hair having been light brown before it was white, and my nose slightly aquiline.

When we meet we will talk over authors—as a general rule (of course there are exceptions) the most disappointing people in the world. My old bookseller. George Whittaker, used to say that "booksellers, next to authors, were the most stupid and ignorant persons under the sun."

Mrs. Southey (she and her husband were quite exceptions, and I believe—indeed I know—that he thought of London authors just as I do)—Mrs. Southey is still living in her old neighbourhood, near Lymington, in Hampshire. We are not personally acquainted, but often interchange kind messages. That marriage was most unfortunate. His disease (softening of the brain, of which Scott and Moore died, and Buckland is dying) had declared itself between the engagement and the wedding. She consulted his brother, Dr. Southey, as to the propriety of the union, and he strongly ad-

vised it. But the disease closed gloomily round him; and his family, I fear, instead of feeling the sacrifice she had made, hardly received her with kindness. After his death, nothing could equal the dissensions among them. Mrs. Southey actually lost a hundred pounds a year by the marriage, having resigned an annuity to that amount left her by a gentleman, to whom she had been engaged in her youth, and retaining only her own fortune. She is said to be an interesting and amiable person—much like her works. Mrs. Trollope is as unlike her as is possible—a lively, brilliant woman of the world, with a warm heart and cordial manner.

I hear also that your countryman, Mr. Lever, is a delightful person. We have interchanged warm messages of goodwill—each being a good deal astonished at the appreciation of the other. I used to read his works to my father, who delighted in them, and whose taste was infallible. He never would listen to anything not excellent in its way.

We have had here nine weeks of drought and east wind; hardly a flower to be seen—no verdure in the meadows, no leaves in the hedgerows. If a poor miserable violet or primrose did make its appearance it was scentless. I have not once heard my aversion, the cuckoo, whom of course—hating him—I do hear more than anybody. And in this place—so eminently the rendezvous of the swallows that it takes its name from them—not a swallow has yet appeared. The only time that I have heard the nightingale I owe the pleasure to you, dearest Mrs. Hoare—for I drove, the one mild day we have had (that on which I received your last charming letter), to a wood where I used to find the wood sorrel in beds. Only two blossoms of that could be found; but a whole chorus of nightingales saluted

me the moment I drove into the wood. I have not heard one since. Yesterday the wind changed, and the rain (after nine weeks without a shower) is coming gently down—to the great discomfiture of Professor Airy, who predicted to Mr. Lucas, a few days ago, five weeks more of east wind. It has lasted too long for me already. I can hardly rise from my chair; and, if I contrive to crawl down stairs, am forced to be lifted up again—I, two years ago the most active woman in Berkshire! Ah! we are smitten in our vanities! The power of walking was the only power I ever remember to have been proud of. I may get a little better—be able, perhaps, to drag myself into my low pony phaeton, instead of being placed in it: but the real power is, I fear, gone beyond recall. Well, I must be thankful for what I have left—the genuine love of nature and of books, and kind and dear friends, new and old, whom my heart springs forth to meet, as if that heart were Irish. I have felt this blessing, of being able to respond to new friendships very strongly lately; for I have lost many old and valued connexions during this trying spring. It is a consolation to have such persons as you, dear Mrs. Hoare, to replace those whom Providence calls to a better world. I thank God far more earnestly for such blessings, than even for my daily bread—for friendship is the bread of the heart.

How entirely I agree with you about Molière! Surely he is almost as much the greatest writer of France as Shakespeare of England. One of their writers calls him "*Le sublime Molière;*" and it is true.

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. HOARE, *Monkstown, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, Spring, 1853.

I do, indeed, adopt you, dearest Mrs. Hoare, as "a friend upon paper"—a true and dear friend! My best and most congenial habits of association and intercourse have so begun; and I do not think that I have ever lost one, who has so taken to me and to whom I have so taken. As to differences of opinion—why the first condition of social intercourse seems to me to be, to agree to differ. I am an old woman, and have always had friends of all parties; and really I hardly know which may count the greater number of gifted and excellent persons. For my own part, I am of no extreme—just midway between dear Mrs. Browning, who is a furious Radical, and dear Mrs. Jennings, who is an equally furious Tory. We have twenty subjects of dispute, at the very least, to which, if conversation flags, we can resort ding-dong. But I have a notion that party disputes in Ireland are much more inveterate than in England; as, indeed, they have lasted for centuries, and have all the elements of different religions, as well as different races, to promote the discord.

Thank you for the capital sketch (your own—it is an amplification of the Castle Rackrent scenes, which Lever also paints so well), and for Callanan's poems. What a beautiful wild country that Lodge of yours is in! Ah! I know how flowers get local names. I was told the other day that the delicate campanula, which we call the *hare*bell, ought to be *hair*bell, from the little fibrous membrane which does give a hairy aspect to its dry, graceful, pendulous flowers. For my part I accept the common names of flowers, and abjure, above all things, the pedantry of being over-right. I thought you

might have a *pink* variety in a soil and climate different from ours and more favourable to vegetation. Our harebell belongs to turfy, sandy commons—the lovely commons which, I am sorry to say, are fast disappearing in our country.

Did I tell you that I am just now almost crippled with rheumatism in knees and ankles, which not only lames me completely, but keeps me prisoner? I live quite alone, having no relations—almost literally none, except a few distant relations too grand to claim. Many kind friends I have—some of them persons of note in literature; but I think I prefer those who love letters without actually following the trade of authorship—the intelligent audience to the actors on the stage. Adieu, dear friend!

Ever faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

ON BEING ASKED IF MISS MITFORD WERE NOT OLD.

Ye would not ask it of the sun, who shines upon us daily;
Or of the fleecy painted clouds, that float above us gaily;
Or of the spring-returning flowers, or the dew their petals lading;
Or the heaven-besprinkling stars, when now their gold is fading;
Or of the crested billows, when upon the shore they're casting
Their flashing sprays of diamond; for ye know them everlasting,
Till their Ruler's might shall gather them within His wondrous holding,
For which we look half-fearfully, frail creatures of His moulding.
The beautiful is never old; our minds are still extending,
And new emotions in the soul are with each moment blending.
And so her spirit seems to me an ever-rising mountain,
Upon whose glorious side still plays that famed Castilian fountain:
Or as an oak, whose green boughs spread and throw luxuriantly
A shelter o'er small birds of song, scarce worthy there to be;
But verdure rests upon her leaves—they dread no frost's decaying—
Her charm upon the landscape cast will ever there be straying.
As mid her own dear village haunts my gauntlet down I'm flinging,
The very birds that flutter round are blythe, my measure singing.
She is not old! the spirit's youth will but to heaven be winging.

You will think me as vain as all the authors of London put together for sending you these verses; but, in truth, I receive too many commendatory poems (as the old dramatists used to call them, when printed at the head of their works) not to know and feel how utterly worthless they are, either as evidences of reputation or for their own sake. But these lines struck both Mr. Lucas and myself as exceedingly beautiful. They are written by a young girl, almost self-educated, to whom I have lent books and given the best advice I could—a very charming person.

To Mrs. Hoare, *Monkstown, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, 1853.

I suspect, dearest Mrs. Hoare, that the general run of country society in Ireland is inferior to ours, and that one cause of your authorial hero-worship is a love of books. Now here everybody has a good library and subscribes to two or three in town or country; has people from London two or three times a week; and talks of literature with as much readiness as writers do. Whilst, in general, they—the country gentry, members of Parliament, magistrates, landed proprietors, retired merchants, London bankers, baronets, lords, the upper clergy, and the womankind belonging to these personages, which forms the fair average of the sixty or seventy families who visit me—are agreeable, simple, unaffected and unpretending. We have no exclusive classes. Whig and Tory meet, and agree to differ—or, rather, never think about it. And, except a few Puseyite curates and elderly young ladies, their admirers and followers, there really is no such thing as pretension or exclusiveness to be found. Being within fifty miles of London perhaps makes some difference; and, for my own especial part,

I know more people, or rather receive more visitors, from the great metropolis than from my own neighbourhood. But I believe that Ireland has been for so many years broken into different races, different religions, and castes of various kinds, that there is less of the fusion of the alloy, which is necessary to render even gold ductile and malleable, than in any other part of the United Kingdom. Then with us—let me say this for the higher classes of English people—where there is talent and character, without vulgar finery or vulgar pretension—above all, without tuft-hunting—I have never found, either in town or country, that the absence of wealth had any other effect than to add to the attention and kindness shown to their visitors. A little of this may, in my case, be attributed to my going out very rarely, and never as a *lion*—no, never!—I had not time and I had not inclination. So friendships have been formed as tastes suited; sometimes with those much richer; sometimes with those much poorer; sometimes with persons of rank; sometimes with tradesmen; —and I never, either in my own case or in that of others, saw the slightest distinction of caste in any one whom I liked well enough to go visit, or (as is always the case now, and has been very long most frequent with me) to invite. All this seems terribly egotistical.

Do get the volume of the 'Readable Library,' containing the works, or selections from the works, of Edgar Poe. The pieces most praised are 'The Raven' and 'The Maelstrom'; those that I prefer are 'The Bells' (finer than Schiller's 'Song of the Bells') and some wonderful tales upon circumstantial evidence.

God bless you, my dear friend!

Ever most faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To Miss Goldsmid, *Summerhill, Tonbridge.*

Swallowfield, June, 1853.

I shall, indeed, rejoice to meet you at Whiteknights on Thursday, dearest Miss Goldsmid, and earnestly trust that the weather may be favourable. Here, we have gentle showers to-day—not impeding the mowers in an opposite meadow,—only enough to freshen the perfume of an exquisite, old-fashioned rose tree, which I have been so lucky as to find in this true cottage garden, and which possesses all the fragrance that these new roses, with all their beauty, are pretty sure to want.

From many quarters I have heard of Herr Devrient—all speaking just as you do. He must be a great actor. John Kemble is the only satisfactory Hamlet I ever saw—owing much to personal grace and beauty—something to a natural melancholy, or rather pensiveness of manner—much, of course, to consummate art. But this is to talk of.

I have only one floating engagement, which I trust will not fall in the way of a meeting, from which I derive so much pleasure even in anticipation. That engagement is in itself interesting. Do you remember, dear Miss Goldsmid, in Gibbon's posthumous works, edited by Lord Sheffield, a very striking letter written by his daughter, Maria Holroyd, to the great historian, with an account of the massacre of the Carmelites, and dated 1792? Well, the writer of that letter (now Lady Stanley of Alderley, and still as vigorous in mind and body as she was sixty years ago), is coming to see me on some speedy day not yet fixed, and one can hardly postpone, or alter the time named by a lady of eighty-two, who comes twenty-four miles for an interview of two

hours. But the stars will be propitious, and the two pleasures will not jostle.

Poor Dr. Mainzer! for rather his poor wife! For one so generous and unselfish must be gone to a happier world.

Ever, dear Miss Goldsmid,
Most affectionately yours,
M. R. MITFORD.

To MISS GOLDSMID, *Whiteknights.*

Swallowfield, June, 1853.
Tuesday afternoon.

Sorry as I am to have missed you, I am yet glad that you should have seen Whiteknights this year in its flowery beauty, and that you should have shown it to Miss Toller—the most interesting of American women, and one whom I should so much like to have met and known. Some day, perhaps, that pleasure may yet happen—I may grow stronger—at least so I will hope. I do all I can to become so by sitting out of doors, to have as much as possible of the summer air, which is, Mr. May says, the best tonic. A very pleasant seat it is, at the corner of my little dwelling, under a great acacia tree, now loaded with snowy tassels waving like the green leaves, and wafting their rich perfume with every motion. Underneath is a syringa bush, also in full flower—the English orange tree, so charming in the open air; and on the table pinks and roses. I quite lament when this showery weather prevents my being transported to that shady seat, or sends me in before my time.

I have a real passion for sweet scents, and like even perfumes, when I cannot get flowers. I suppose it is to this love of flowers that I owe a singular visitor

that was found in my room last night. As K—— was putting me to bed, she broke forth in a series of exclamations, all of which ended in a desire that I would look in the candlestick. At first I saw nothing but a dull-looking caterpillar, till the creature moved, and then came a tiny reflection of green light. It was a glowworm. I could not go to look after it, bright star of the earth as it is! There were two jars of pinks and roses from the garden; and there had been one of wild honeysuckle from the lane. Of course it must have entered with the flowers. We extinguished the light, and Sam deposited the candlestick on the little plot of grass before the door, and in ten minutes it had crawled out upon the grass. I hope it will live out its little life in comfort. Was it not a singular circumstance?

So you do not go into Kent? Ah! I cannot help hoping that we may meet this year. Adieu, dearest Miss Goldsmid.

Ever faithfully yours,
M. R. M.

Did you know Grace Aguilar? I am reading her last volume of tales. How affecting they are! And how healthy and true is the pathos—springing, as it does, from our best affections—from generosity, from self-sacrifice, and sometimes from a gush of joy. She was a great loss to female literature, and must have been a charming and admirable person.

To Mrs. Hoare, *Monkstown, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, Autumn, 1853.

It is not because Mr. —— is a Tractarian, dearest Mrs. Hoare, that Mrs. —— dislikes him, but because she considers him (truly enough, I think), as a mere

smooth versifier, without an atom of poetry in him. In these days there are thousands such :

> "I trust we have within our realm,
> Five hundred good as he"

would be an under-estimate of our present affluence of versifiers of that calibre. Of course Mrs. —— likes him none the better for remaining a Puseyite; because all the honest and earnest and really clever men of that school go immediately to Rome; Puseyism being nothing more nor less than popery in black and white—without the poetry, without the painting, without the music, without the architecture—without the exquisite beauty which wins the imagination in the ancient faith. For my own part, I hold too firmly to the true Protestant doctrine (which so many Protestants forget) of freedom of thought—complete liberty of conscience—for others as well as myself—ever to become a Roman Catholic; but I have many friends of that persuasion. My favourite young friend is a Catholic convert, and I can quite understand the process: what I do not understand is the claiming for the Church of England all that is repudiated in the Church of Rome. In Reading we have a clergyman who, whenever he can, gets around him seven assistants, and practises all the forms and ceremonies of the mass, without any of the prestige; and every now and then one meets in society bilious-looking young men, with coats as long as my gown, *doucereux*, *mielleux*, and wanting nothing of being real Jesuits but the instruction and the knowledge of human nature by which that society is commonly distinguished. The Anglicans, as they call themselves, have commonly a large female following; and, indeed, of nothing is one more ashamed than the way in which single women, old and young, run after curates. Living within thirty

miles of Oxford, and the sons of all one's acquaintances belonging to that university, I have of course seen much of them, and have observed that, from Dr. Newman downwards, all men of any intellect have either quietly drawn back from their peculiar tenets or have gone over to the Roman Catholic Church. Newman's last book, 'Lectures to the Brothers of the Oratory,' is a capital piece of writing, better, because less recondite and more popular, than those admirably written 'Tracts for the Times,' in which we always recognised his master-hand. Of course I see the fallacies, the one-sidedness, and the sophistry; but as mere writing—to read as a high intellectual treat, as one reads 'Junius' or 'Les Lettres Provinciales'—I know nothing finer, especially the travestie of an Exeter Hall speech put into the mouth of a Russian general, where 'Blackstone's Commentaries' is substituted for 'Dens' Theology.'

I suspect that you, my friend, from your Irish training, will be a little shocked at my allowing to Roman Catholics exactly the same freedom of conscience which I claim for myself; and I can understand that also—not merely because you have been trained, in an antagonism of sects, to dwell upon differences amongst Christians, whilst I have looked chiefly to the great accordances; but because, with us, Roman Catholics are almost universally persons of ancient family and very high breeding, accustomed to a certain high tone of manners and morals—as if, in days of persecution, it was needful for them to be better than their neighbours. You can hardly imagine how finely this tells in a great north country house, for example, with the chapel and the chaplain, and the regularity of the family worship—so apart from ostentation, that it is, as much as it can be,

concealed from Protestant guests. You, on the other hand, see none but the least cultivated and the poorest; and, I suppose, as a rule, that the Irish Catholic priest is very inferior to the accomplished men, trained at Prior Park or Ascot and then sent to a foreign college, whom we see in England; although, here and there, Banim and Gerald Griffin have given magnificent pictures of pastoral devotedness and simplicity. God grant the day may come in which good men of all shades of doctrine may command the love and respect of all!

As a rule, Puseyism is a mere transition state for the many fine intellects who have passed through it. Dr. Pusey himself appears to me a very ordinary man. The great light was Newman. I do not know him, and probably never shall; but I know one trait of his character whilst still at Oxford which struck me much. It happened that a distant connexion of my mother's, the eldest son of a chaplain in the navy, was seized with a violent fancy to go to Oxford. He was a plodding lad of Greek and metres—with singular good conduct, but no shining talents—likely to get on by classical knowledge as a tutor or professor. There was a large family, and little money; and his father told him at once, "Frank, I cannot afford the necessary allowance." "Just give me a little to begin with, father," returned Frank, "and I will get on as my betters have done before me, by teaching others, while learning myself." His schoolmaster being sure that he could and would do this, Frank was sent to Oxford, taking, amongst other recommendations, letters from me, in which I openly told this design. One of my letters was to an old friend of Mr. Newman's, to whom he showed it; and, when next I saw Frank, he told me—

somewhat to my alarm (for it was in the very height of the controversy)—that he owed to me the kind notice of that great scholar. "I breakfast with him once a week," quoth Frank, "and he gives me the best advice possible." "What about?" I inquired. "Everything," returned Frank—"the classics, history, mathematics, general literature. He thinks me in danger of overworking myself at Greek"—he, such a scholar!—"and tells me to diversify my reading, to take exercise, and to get as much practical knowledge and cheerful society as I can. He questioned me about Shakespeare's poetry, and the prose writers after Lord Bacon. In short, he talks to me of every sort of subject, except what is called Tractarianism, and that he has never mentioned."

Now this seemed to me most honourable. Here were a mind and heart plastic in his hand to mould as he liked; but doubtless he saw that it would have been bad for the poor boy's prospects, and abstained. The end has been, that the lad became Low Church, and would have done well as a tutor, only he fell in love with a girl of some small fortune, and was, when I last heard of him, married on a curacy; but with so much scholarship and so high a degree and so good a character as will insure him private pupils if he wants them. Was not this very honourable in Dr. Newman?

I have just been reading another volume of Poe, with additional tales—very painful. Mr. Fields says he arrived at Boston to give a lecture so drunk that they got him to bed. Before evening he got drunk again, and requested to read a poem instead of giving a lecture, as he had forgotten to bring the lecture with him. The permission was given of course, and the poem turned out to be 'The Raven.' That night he told Mr. Fields

that "there was yet no drama—Shakespeare was nothing; but there should be one if he lived. He had it all in his head."

Of course you know his story—how he died of delirium tremens, in the prime of life, after throwing away more opportunities than ever man had before. His countrymen were most generous and kind to him. It is a terrible contrast, in that point of view, to the story of Gerald Griffin and Chatterton, and doubtless many other men of genius in England.

How long the above has been written, dearest Mrs. Hoare, I cannot tell. Between ill-health, an overwhelming correspondence, and an incredible number of visitors, my best and oldest friends accept me upon the condition of uncertainty as to letter-writing; but, if I be forgetful as to epistolary debts, I am not, I assure you, forgetful of friends or neglectful of friendship. Latterly I have been so much engaged, for one still so weak, that that would in itself be an excuse. But there are many things that I have to talk to you about when I have time.

Ever faithfully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

I feel very much the pressure of the work that I have undertaken—the long tale. I never write anything without going over it three times; and the mere act of writing—the position—when it comes to four or five hours of continuous work, is very trying indeed. One can hardly bear the pain. But the booksellers, who have behaved exceedingly well in every way, are so unwilling to give up the story, that I feel bound to go on with it.

'Hypatia,'—I have been reading that. It is full of vigour and power. Mr. Kingsley takes your old friends

Cyril and Augustine down from their pedestals, and lowers them into human beings. He animates that whole mob of Alexandria—animates and individualizes Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Goth and Jew. He puts life into the very sands of the desert. But there are some strange things, and I half dread what the bishops may say, though he is so excellent as a parish priest, and so much beloved in his parish, that I hope they will take his bits of truth, and his vivid description of scenes which doubtless occurred, as parts of a picture; they will if they have sense. It is certainly a work of great power.

To MISS GOLDSMID.

Swallowfield, Winter of 1853.

If you have time for reading, do look at De Quincey's Autobiography, now republished in England. The truth and life of those Lake sketches is something wonderful. Of course the blind worshippers of Wordsworth quarrel with him; but there is quite enough left to praise and admire in the bard of 'The Excursion,' after accepting Mr. De Quincey's portrait. Two or three of my friends have visited Mr. De Quincey at Lasswade, where he now lives (did Miss Caroline see him when with poor Dr. Mainzer?), and they all say that it is the strangest mixture, of an appearance so neglected that he looks like an old beggar, of manners so perfect that they would do honour to a prince, and of conversation unapproached for brilliancy. He confessed to one of my friends, who saw him on a bad day, that he could only quiet his nerves by a semi-intoxication with opium—so that he has not left it off. His daughter Margaret, my correspondent, whose letters are as charming as her father's books, is going to be married to a young Scotch-

man who has bought land in Tipperary; a venture; but a genial young couple may, I think, find and make friends amongst the Irish. I should not be afraid, should you? Adieu, dear friend.

Ever most gratefully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. BROWNING, *Florence.*

Swallowfield, Nov. 10, 1853.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

I cannot enough thank you for your most affectionate letter. I am still just as I was; but I have no sort of faith either in homœopathy or mesmerism. Indeed my friend, Dr. Spencer Hall, the great mesmerist, gave up the one, which had nearly killed him, and has taken to the other, which, I suppose, does less harm to the physician if not to the patient; so that I have got to believe them grown-up toys, the skipping-ropes and battledores of elderly people; and I now cling obstinately enough to the quiet rational ways of established practitioners. My present ailment is rheumatism, which has long been coming on—"a highly rheumatic condition," to use the medical phrase, upon which that terrible overturn, just at the beginning of a wet winter, fell like a spark among gunpowder. I don't think there is the slightest chance of any improvement, and must be content with what remains to me—the use of my intellect, and to a certain extent of my right hand, a comfortable cottage, excellent servants, kind neighbours, and most dear friends. And this is much. We must not forget, in thinking of my case, that for above thirty years I had perpetual anxieties to encounter—my parents to support and for a long time to nurse—and generally an amount of labour and of worry and of care of every sort, such as has seldom

fallen to the lot of woman. I had not time to take care of myself, or of my health; and that, beyond a doubt, laid the foundation of my complaints. When I see you in the summer, my own beloved friend, if it please God to spare me so long, you will perhaps find me sitting under my acacia tree; and I hope to get a garden chair and be wheeled about in the open air. It is a great thing to have a man like Sam, at once so strong and so gentle, who can bear me along by putting his hands under my arms, and even lift me down stairs step by step—only that that is so painful a process that I avoid it whenever I can, and see as few strangers or mere acquaintances as possible.

I have had a most interesting account of Miss Bronté and a charming letter from her. She is a little, quiet, gentle person; the upper part of the face good, but something amiss in the formation of the mouth; her conversation full of power and charm. She lives with her father—the only child remaining out of six—in a most secluded Yorkshire village amongst the moors. He is a gentlemanly and amiable man. I suppose the living is very small, for Miss Bronté went to France for two years; and the *debût* of Lucy Stowe (*vide* 'Villette'), in Brussels, was literally her own. She also speaks to me of coming to London without necessity, as a thing hardly warrantable; and seems to me exceedingly unaffected and unspoilt. I like both 'Shirley' and 'Villette.'

Remember me to your dear Robert and Mrs. Trollope.

Ever most affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

CHAPTER XV.

Letters for 1854 5.

To the Rev. William Harness, *Kensington Gore.*

Swallowfield, March 26, 1854.

My dear Friend,

I do indeed rejoice to hear that that sweet child is recovering. Poor Mr. and Mrs. Hope! What a winter of anxiety this must have been to them!

Heartily glad shall I be to see you. For half an hour, or perhaps a whole one, you will find the old good spirits; but strength is quite gone; and any fatigue brings a tenfold accession of the terrible neuralgic pain over the chest and under the arms. Between three and four, previous to the dreadful operation of getting up, is my best time. K—— and Sam will tell you all about me. By-the-by, be so good as to bring the will. I wish to leave that five hundred pounds to them, feeling sure, that, even were K—— to die, Sam might be trusted implicitly. They have been everything to me this winter.

Poor Talfourd! He came to see me the Sunday he was in Reading, and we talked with the old friendship, and parted with the old cordiality. Both felt that it was a last parting, although neither dreamt which strand of the cord was so soon to give way. I am very glad to have seen him, and that our last interview should have been so affectionate. He spoke with a glowing thankfulness of your kindness, in promising his

son a title, and of the advantage of his being your curate. Lady Talfourd is just the woman to bear this trial well; there is a great deal of stern stuff in her character.

'Atherton' has twice nearly killed me—once in writing—now, very lately, in correcting the proofs. The original printer having failed, they sent the whole volume in four consecutive days. Don't read the shorter stories, only 'Atherton,' and tell me how you like it.

Poor Lady Russell is very anxious about Sir Charles, who forms one of the expedition now at Malta. She is as faithful to me as ever. Love to dear Mary.

Ever, my dear friend,
Most affectionately yours,
M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. BROWNING, *Rome.*

Swallowfield, March 29, 1854.

Weaker and weaker, dearest friend, and worse and worse; and writing brings on such agony that you would not ask for it if you knew the consequences. It seems that in that overturn the spine was seriously injured. There was hope that it might have got better; but last summer destroyed all chance. This accounts for the loss of power in the limbs, and the anguish in the nerves of the back, and more especially in those over the chest and under the arms. Visitors bring on such exhaustion, and such increase of pain, that Mr. May forbids all but Lady Russell. Perhaps by the time you arrive in England I may be a little better. If so, it would be a great happiness to see you, if only for half an hour.

May God bless you, my beloved friend, and all whom you love!

M. R. MITFORD.

To JOHN LUCAS, *Esq.*

Swallowfield, April 11, 1854.

Thank you, dearest Mr. Lucas, for liking 'Atherton,' and, above all, for telling me so. Other people are so good as to like it also. William Harness, John Ruskin, Henry Hope, and persons of that class; so if you mistake you err in good company. Everybody detests the portrait; William Harness says that it represents "a fierce, dark, strong-minded woman." Mr. Hope says that "not only is it utterly unlike the author of 'Atherton,' and 'Our Village,' but that it was morally impossible that it should have been like her, although it might very possibly be a striking likeness of the author of 'Uncle Tom.'" This is killing two birds with one stone, after the fashion of that thrice charming person.

I am almost confined to my bed, and so weak as to be exhausted by half an hour's conversation; but there is a chance that, if I and my bed can be transplanted into my little sitting-room (say six weeks or two months hence) I may have a charming garden-chair which has just been given to me, wheeled to my bedside, and through the window. This is, at all events, a delightful hope. God bless you all!

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. JENNINGS, *Portland Place.*

Swallowfield, Monday [in May, 1854].

Ah! dearest friend! how glad I should have been if you could have come to see me before leaving London, and how sad it seems that another year should

pass away without my meeting you and dear Mr. Jennings.

An avalanche of kindness has come from America, where, as in Paris, my book has been reprinted. Letters to me, or for me, addressed through my friend Mr. Fields, have arrived, I think from almost every man of note in the States; Hawthorne, Longfellow, Holmes, &c., &c. And one lady, Mrs. Sparks, wife of Jared Sparks, President of Harvard University, Cambridge, gravely invites me, with man-servant and maid-servant, pony and Fanchon, to go and take up my abode with them for two or three years; an unlimited hospitality, which, as she could not know with how much impunity invitations may be sent to me, seems to English ears astounding. Cambridge is close to Boston, where most of the literary men of America live; and, if I were not such a miserable, helpless creature, really one would be tempted to go and thank all these warmhearted people for their extraordinary kindness.

Mr. Hawthorne has just finished another tale, which an acquaintance, who has seen the MS., speaks of as even finer than the works we know. I suppose it will be printed as soon as my friend Mr. Fields (whom I am expecting here on Wednesday) returns to the United States. He is a partner in the greatest publishing house of America, and the especial patron of Hawthorne, whom he found starving, and has made almost affluent by his encouragement and liberality; for the great romancer is so nervous that he wants as much kindness of management, as much mental nursing, as a sick child. I have never known a more charming person than Mr. Fields, quite a young man, who has been in France and Italy all the winter

to recover from the shock occasioned by the death of his young wife. He has brought me no end of memoirs, portraits, and busts of Louis Napoleon, for whom I have a passion. Mrs. Browning (a stanch Republican, who went to Paris with a bundle of letters of introduction from Mazzini) is quite as enthusiastic about him as I am; so is Mr. Fields, who has spent the last month there, only they are less frank, and pretend to be cool judges. Ah! I should just like to tell you a few stories about him which I know to be true!

It is not only 'Faust' that Longfellow has made free with, but an old German poem, from which he has taken the story, much improving the catastrophe. The 'Evangeline,' if you remember, was taken from Goethe's 'Herman and Dorothea.' I am glad you like the 'Golden Legend;' I do heartily, especially the Sermon on the Bell; it is so racy, and so full of spirit and of life. There are three new American poets whom you would like—Bayard Taylor, Stoddart, and Reede—young men, quite. If I should live, and recover to write another book, I shall give some specimens of these writers, although a new book of mine would have perhaps few specimens, except the quite forgotten and the quite new.

All happiness to you both! Believe me ever, dearest friends,

Most faithfully and affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. JENNINGS, *Portland Place.*

Swallowfield, May 22, 1854.

DEAREST MRS. JENNINGS,

Thank you for your kindness in liking 'Atherton.' It has been a great comfort to me to find it so indul-

gently, so very warmly received. Mr. Mudie told Mr. Hurst that the demand was so great that he was obliged to have four hundred copies in circulation. I do not think the story would have been the better for being longer; and as for alterations and additions, after two editions of a work have been sold (to say nothing of those in Paris, Leipsic, and half the cities in America), they are out of the question. Katy is too young for love; and I could not have lengthened the story without letting the secret ooze out and spoiling the effect of the last scene. In all my suffering I yet took such pains with 'Atherton,' that every page was written three times over.

The days, or weeks, or even perhaps months (very few) that I may last, will be entirely a question of the duration of my power of receiving nourishment, and that is in His hands who knows what is best for us. I feel all your kindness, and can only send you my thanks and blessings.

I am sitting now at my open window, not high enough to see out of, but inhaling the soft summer breezes, with an exquisite jar of roses on the window-sill, and a huge sheaf of fresh-gathered meadow-sweet giving its almondy fragrance from outside; looking on blue sky and green waving trees, with a bit of road and some cottages in the distance, and K——'s little girl's merry voice calling Fanchon in the court.

Yes! the Emperor is a great and wonderful man; greater, I think, than his uncle, because he can command himself, and looks to the happiness of his people rather than to the soldier's glory. My young neighbour, Sir Charles Russell, is with his battalion (Grenadier Guards) at Aladyn. One of his letters amused me much. He said that the French soldiers passed their leisure time in catching frogs. Does not this carry us

back to the days of Hogarth and Smollett? Say everything for me to your own Robert and to Mrs. Trollope.

Ever, my most beloved friend,

Your affectionate,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the REV. HUGH PEARSON, *Sonning.*

Sallowfield, July 22, 1854.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

Will you forgive my inconsistency if I beg you to defer the administration of the sacrament till we have met again? The thought agitates me more than I can express, especially as the time approaches. I am quite sure that it would prevent my getting any rest for at least two nights, and do me more harm physically than any one not acquainted with my nervous temperament could possibly imagine. In great part this is the fault of the body; but it can hardly be the desirable state of mind for the reception of that holy ordinance.

Be sure, dearest friend, that I do not fail in meditation, such as I can give, and prayer. It is my own unworthiness and want of an entire faith that troubles me.

But I am a good deal revived by sitting at the open window, in this sweet summer air, looking at the green trees and the blue sky, and thinking of His goodness who made this lovely world. And I doubt if it be even right to give myself so great a shake as I know would be the result of any agitation or emotion.

Let me have one line, and forgive my hesitation. I know what the physical effect of emotion, or even the fear of emotion, is upon me. It was merely the visit of a dear friend—a mere pleasurable excitement—which brought on the struggle for breath and the consequent exhaustion.

Ever most affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the Rev. William Harness, *Kensington Gore.*

Swallowfield, Aug. 25, 1854.

My very dear Friend,

I received on Monday, with Sam and my dear old friend, Mrs. C. Stephens, sister of Sir W. P. Wood, the sacrament at Mr. Pearson's hands. I wish you had been here also. I think you will approve of my having done so, not merely as a Christian, however unworthy, but as adhering to the Church of England, which, with all its faults, is the most large and liberal of the many English sects. For my own part, I fully believe that this long visitation has been the greatest mercy of the gracious God, who has been very good to me all through life. I firmly believe that it was sent to draw me to Him. May He give me grace not to throw away the opportunity! I have twice gone through the Gospels, and once through the whole of the New Testament, since we met; and I *believe* with my whole mind and heart that divine history. Still, dearest friend, I find it difficult to realize; and I am troubled in prayer with wandering thoughts. Pray that He may quicken my faith and deepen my repentance. I feel fully my own unworthiness, and that my hope must be in His mercy. Pray for me, dear friend!

You would love Hugh Pearson. I have no words to speak of his piety, his tenderness, and his charity. He is just a younger Dr. Arnold, fully worthy to be your friend.

I have had the kindest possible letter from Dean Milman; and I do not think there is an authoress of name who has not sent me messages full of the kindest interest. It is one of the highest mercies by which this

visitation has been softened, that I can still give my thoughts and time and love and sympathy, not merely to dear friends, but to books and flowers, and the common doings of this work-a-day world.

I hope Miss Hope continues well, and her father and mother happy, and that you are enjoying yourself. When do you return to the Deepdene?

Ever affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. BROWNING, *Florence.*

Swallowfield, Aug. 28, 1854.

I am still spared, my beloved friend, still lingering here, wasted to skin and bone, and in such a state that a week ago my beloved friend, Hugh Pearson, took leave of me for three weeks, hoping, but evidently not expecting, that we should meet again here below. I wish you knew Mr. Pearson. He is a man as beloved as any I have ever known—of exquisite taste and the keenest sympathy. I went to him for spiritual comfort, being persuaded that this visitation has been sent most mercifully by the Great Father to draw me to Himself and to the Divine Mediator. May He grant me His grace that the opportunity may not be lost! But I am troubled by wandering, fluttering thoughts—an impossibility of fixing the mind in prayer. I long for a quicker, livelier, more realizing faith. Pray for me, my beloved friend.

Well! this being my state, and intellect still granted, and actual writing less difficult (the pen being filled with ink and my paper fixed for me) than it often has been, I have often thought that I would write one

more letter, such as I used to write. Sometimes persons in my state linger longer than might be expected; and I should like to hear that you, and especially that your sweet boy, has not suffered from the heats of Florence during this splendid harvest, which has been tryingly hot in England—although never, for crops or for weather, has been known such plenty so gathered in — a national mercy of the most blessed kind, for the poor suffered grievously last winter from high prices. Now, either bread must be cheaper or wages higher, perhaps both. Tell me that you are all well, and that your darling has regained his roundness and his roses.

I have had bad news about the poor Talfourds. About a month ago a Reading solicitor, who had been long living much above his income, ran away with between twenty thousand and thirty thousand pounds belonging to various persons—amongst the rest with four thousand pounds of Lady Talfourd's, forming a considerable part of what the Judge had saved. Is it not strange that since the poor Judge's death not one copy of his works has been sold? But we all know how soon the world forgets.

Mr. Tom Taylor is reappointed Secretary to the Board of Health, with a salary of one thousand pounds a year. I suppose there is not in English literature a young man so truly admirable in mind and in conduct. Dear Mr. John Ruskin was, when I last heard from him, at Geneva, with his parents, sending me everything that he could imagine to help or amuse me. His last gift was a French volume, 'Scenes et Proverbes, par Octave Feuillet.' Do you know it? 'La Clef d'Or' is very pretty. Farewell, well-beloved friend, farewell! May Heaven bless you, and all whom you love!

M. R. MITFORD.

My young neighbour Sir Charles Russell is with his battalion of the Guards at Varna. His account of the mismanagement of our troops is fearful. In all matters of administration the French are generations before us. There is nothing but sickness, and neither medicines nor surgeons.

To the Rev. William Harness, *Blaney Castle, Ireland.*

Swallowfield, Sept. 4, 1854.

My very dear Friend,

I have always believed with a calm conviction in that divine history and that divine mission; but I used to worry myself about the manner of it. Now I am reading the Gospels for the third time within two or three months, and accepting the whole of the holy mystery as I find it. Mystery there must be; and it is wiser to take humbly the relation of eye-witnesses than to seek to reconcile what we cannot comprehend by our own feeble intelligence. But still it is a calm conviction—quite without the lively and vivifying illumination which I hear people talk of—and greatly troubled by wandering thoughts. However, dear Mr. Pearson (who is just such another as yourself) did not seem to mind that; and I throw myself humbly, hopingly, fearingly, on the mercy of God.

I wish you were sitting close to me at this moment, that we might talk over your plans . . . Swallowfield churchyard, the plain tablet, and the walking funeral have only one objection—that my father and mother lie in Shenfield church, and that there is room left above them for me. But I greatly dislike the place where the vault is—just where all the schoolboys kick their heels—and I doubt the room. After all, I leave that to you—I mean the whole affair of the funeral.

It is very doubtful whether I shall live till October. At present I am better; but since I have been better Mr. May would not answer for my seeing Mr. Pearson again three weeks hence.

Before talking of other things, let me say that I now put up my feet upon *your* chair. You will not like it the less for having contributed to my comfort. I am still as cheerful as ever, which surprises people much. Is it uncommon?

What a royal demesne Mr. Hope's must be, and how admirably he will rule over it. I remember your saying that justice was the distinguishing virtue of that fine mind—large, with all its fineness; add, what I am sure of, great sagacity, and you get the two qualities most wanted in that station and that country. He and Mrs. Hope will do immense good there. Long may they live, and happy be their reign! I hope the dear little princess is really recovered. Say everything for me to them all, and to your own dear people. God bless you all!

Ever yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

Your letter has been a great comfort to me, because you do not seem to think that rapturous assurance of acceptance necessary. My hope is a trembling one, from the consciousness of my many sins; but yet it is a real though fearful trust in the infinite mercy of God and the promises of the Gospel. Is this enough? I am a real skeleton.

To MRS. JENNINGS.

Swallowfield, Sept. 20, 1854.

I cannot help answering your most charming letter, dearest Mrs. Jennings, which has given me the highest gratification—first, from its affection, which I most truly

reciprocate—next, for its spiritual views, which are exactly my own. I am now reading the Gospels for the third time within the last two months; and I see in them such love, such mercy, such charity, that it is impossible to weigh the rare threats against the constant promises. My friend Mr. Harness never mentions faith in his letters without interpolating confidence. So—"faith (confidence)." And the other dear friend, Hugh Pearson, who has been so much to me, and who is just returning from Switzerland, where he has been with Arthur Stanley, is just a younger Bishop Stanley, or Dr. Arnold himself.

For my own part, I hold this visitation to have been sent in mercy by that most merciful God to draw me to Him. May He grant His grace that the opportunity be not cast away! I have none of the "holy joys" that I often hear of, nor even your "home feeling," dear friend; nothing but a trembling, fearful, humble hope, and a full sense of my own unworthiness. Nay, I have much to strive against in wandering thoughts, which often beset me in prayer. But I strive against them, and, through Christ's infinite love and mercy, I have hope. Pray for me, dearest friends, as, all unworthy as I am, I have prayed for you and yours.

I have now somewhat better news to tell you of my health: so far better that, though still in imminent danger, there is now (humanly speaking) a probability that my life may be for some brief space prolonged. I am obliged to sit on an easy-chair day and night, sitting on a wool cushion, sometimes propped by air cushions, sometimes with my feet on another chair. About three weeks since an amendment took place. I fluctuated—better one day, worse the next; still, at the end of every week, I was better than the week before; and two days

ago my friend Mr. Barrett coming to see me from London, and Mr. May arriving at the same time, the latter said, in answer to his inquiries, "that he could answer for nothing—that he should be very sorry to give false hopes—that the danger was still great, though there did seem now a possibility of such an amendment as might prolong life—but that any cold, over-fatigue, or over-exertion—anything, in short, which affected the breath, would certainly carry me off in a few hours." The case simply is, that I am no longer utterly given over. But this is much, and, under Providence, I owe it entirely to the unwearied friendship of Mr. May, who, with his enormous practice, and I being six miles off, and, as he thought, in a hopeless state, instead of abandoning the stranded ship, continued to watch every symptom, and to try every resource of his noble art as anxiously as if fame and fortune depended upon his success. May God bless and reward him! I cannot tell you what alleviations have been brought to my sick room.

Forgive my not writing again for a long while; I am ordered not to write. Tell dear Mrs. Dupuy what Mr. May says. But do you come and see me as soon as you return to town.

Ever yours,
M. R. MITFORD.

I have just heard from Miss Manning, who is suffering from a severe illness. Nothing can equal her piety and resignation.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *Kensington Gore.*

Swallowfield, Oct. 30, 1854.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

I write to you having just read Mrs. Opie's Life, and experiencing a desire to talk of it. What a miser-

able hash they have made of what might have been so interesting! What a miserable hash *she* made of her own existence! Nothing is clearer than the hankering she had after her old artistic and literary world. She even contrived to mix gay parties with May meetings to the very last. But the want of congruity jars in the book, and must have jarred still more in actual life; more especially as those Fry and Gurney people—popes male and female in their way—seem to have taken upon them to lecture the dear soul. How she declined in taste and in intelligence after joining the Friends! wasting so much good enthusiasm on that bag of wind, Lafayette,—taken in by that humbug, as he, in his turn, was taken in by Louis Philippe!

The most satisfactory thing in the whole work is a letter to her from Mrs. Inchbald—whose 'Simple Story' is worth a wilderness of Mrs. Opie's slipshod tales. I had not a notion how bad her English was till this reading. I suppose that one grows more and more fastidious till the power of judging deserts us altogether. But it is not merely the good writing that strikes me in Mrs. Inchbald's letter; it is her loyalty to the great Emperor—the womanly fidelity with which she clings to her admiration for Napoleon—then our most formidable enemy. She fights the ground inch by inch, and never retreats a single hair's breadth from the first line to the last. I wish I had known her! An old friend of mine used to tell me how, being her neighbour in Leicester Square, it was edifying to see her order and regularity in putting her room to rights—doing all the work to save money for a sister, sufficiently unthankful. She was a great woman, and faithful to greatness. Do you remember how Benjamin West, on a lord-in-waiting being sent to tell him of the Emperor's escape from Elba stole off to

the furthest corner of the house and gave three cheers? I wish he had been a better painter, if only for that true story.

Another person to whom this work does huge injustice is Mary Wollstonecraft. Of course I don't go along with her extreme opinions, although they are but pale, not to say faded pink, compared with the dashing scarlet of American and French audacity; but she was an exquisite writer. Madame de Staël stole much from her; but *her* French is miserable bombast compared to Mary Wollstonecraft's charming English; and Georges Sand—approaching her in the pure and perfect style—is wide as the poles apart from her in purity of feeling; for, married or not married, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote like a modest woman—was a modest woman.

To come back to Mrs. Opie; as her life was a double one, so should have been her biography—one book rose colour for the world, another drab for the Quakers. I doubt, too, if it be permissible to ignore so entirely the absolute engagement she was under to marry Lord Herbert Stuart (I forget names, but surely it was Lord Herbert, a lame man). My good old friend Sir William Elford was invited by her to meet him at dinner; at that time all was arranged and the time fixed for the wedding. It went off on agreement, because each had enough to live on—he as a bachelor in lodgings, passing eight months of the year in the country houses of kinsfolk and friends, and she as a poor authoress without the encumbrance of rank; but they could not muster enough to keep house and preserve a certain appearance in days when broughams and pages were not, and horses and men were, essential to an establishment, however modest. Then things are so smoothed over. All her

friends knew how hard it was that the furniture for which she had worked should be sold for the benefit of her coarse sister. In short — besides the omission of quantities of anecdotes, like that you told me respecting Sir Thomas Lawrence and the Siddons sisters—I have seldom seen a biography which suppressions on the one hand, and glossings over on the other, have rendered more unfaithful, more untruthful, than this Quaker biography. Mrs. Opie was herself so kind and excellent a woman, that she could well have afforded to have the truth told respecting her. But as you say—or rather as my correspondent the curate of Todley says—these people, who are good *ex officio*, do contrive to be no better than their neighbours, and sometimes to be a good deal worse.

Only think of their having stereotyped 'Atherton' in America! It is a beautiful edition, with a fine American engraving from John Lucas's portrait—the only engraving like what I was three years ago.

I have hardly been well enough lately for the bed experiment.* The first cold night I shall try. God bless you!

M. R. M.

To the Rev. Hugh Pearson, *Sonning.*

Nov. 24, 1854.

I am so sorry, dearest friend, that I worried you by writing yesterday, but Mr. Bennock's kindness to me is so much that of a son that you will pardon my desire not to keep him in suspense. I shall write to him by this post, fixing Dec. 9th for our meeting. I most gratefully accept your and Mrs. Stephens's offer, to

* Trying to go to bed, instead of sitting up all night in an arm-chair.

come here on St. Andrew's Day to receive the holy communion. I was most unwilling to defer that sacred and comfortable rite until illness should prostrate me mind and body. At present I am clear enough mentally, and not too weak physically, to give my whole faculties to the blessed office. I had a most kind note from Mrs. Stephens, informing me of its being her birthday. I write to her by this post. I trust, by God's blessing, I may still hope for some prolongation of existence; at least so I argue from Mr. May's manner and the change of medicine. Remember, Saturday the 9th, the engagement is peremptory, because Mr. Bennock cannot come on any other day; and I want you to know each other.

To-day brought me a most delightful note from dear Mr. Ruskin; he is suffering from an obstinate cold and inflammation of the throat. You shall see all his letters: they are charming.

I cannot think from whom I long ago gathered my notion of the good Archbishop.* Somebody who knows him, for it corresponds exactly with your account. Those are the men for high places. I have always thought the working clergy contained many of the best and most cultivated men in the kingdom; but to keep the Church in the affections of the people, the bishops should, as a body, resemble him who is at their head. This book of Maria Norris—which is a dissenting novel full of artistic faults, and not quite so good in the last volumes as in the first—gives a picture, only too true, of high church and low church excesses, not excluding those of dissenters. It is a most honest book, from which all extreme parties might learn much good, if red-hot partisans ever would admit plain, naked, unadorned truth.

* Sumner.

This war is sickening! Lady Russell received a telegraphic message, at two o'clock on Wednesday, to tell her that her son's name was not in Lord Raglan's fatal list; and yesterday she had a letter, dated the 7th, from Sir Charles himself, partly, I believe, written on the 6th. A terrible history of the Grenadier Guards. Of those officers, his tent mates, two were killed and one mortally wounded; of the battalion, one thousand strong when they sailed, only two hundred remained. But, my dear friend, think of those savage Russians! they went about killing the wounded. One officer, a friend of Sir Charles, was stabbed in three places as he lay on the ground, after being shot through the body. It was a complete butchery. Of course the poor mother has already begun to fear again; although, being now too weak to defend their old post, they will be, I trust, in a less exposed position. Nothing can exceed the good feeling between the French and English armies. Heaven bless you!

Ever most affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To MRS. JENNINGS.

Swallowfield, Nov. 29, 1854.

This war is terrible to think of, especially its mismanagement—the worst of surgeons and hospital dressers and orderlies; for, between ourselves, I have no faith in the lady nurses. Mr. May says that the whole faculty are unanimous in distrusting their power of being of real use. They will probably sicken and die, and certainly be in the way and give trouble. Men are required. Even the female hospital nurses of London wards would be of small avail amongst those sights and sounds and smells. Besides, there are things which even a sister and a daughter should not see, only a mother

or a wife. But those ladies wanted excitement and notoriety, and they have got them. I wonder who published Sidney Herbert's letter, which certainly could not have been intended for publication? I suppose the Nightingales; for it is certain that Miss Florence's sister has written a poem in her glorification. Our men are, as you say, admirable in their valour and their devotedness. Did you know Mr. John Whatle, the Catholic priest? With a very considerable fortune, which he always spent in charities, making no difference between Papist or Protestant, and a very frail body, he devoted himself in a cause in which he was sure to perish, because sure not to spare himself. Our men are admirable, whether surgeon or chaplain, or officer or private soldier; but I have no patience with our incapable government, or our notoriety-seeking women. It is just like the Mrs. Stowe fever. She is here forgotten now like a gone-by fashion—forgotten everywhere but in her own land—where they always knew her. As you say, it is fearful to read names that one only knew as gay, kind, genial young men, shot down in this fearful manner. I try to get away from the thoughts as often as I can, but they always cling to me. May it please God to spare your cousin!

Have you a mind to read a dissenting novel?—a rarity, because there is a distaste for works of fiction among the sectarians; and one seldom gets a truthful view of the habits of a dissenting family. One has just been dedicated to me. The book (by name 'Philip Lancaster') is so clever that the writer ought to be ashamed of herself for having sent it into the world as full of artistic faults as an egg is of meat.

I have been also reading some old novels which I loved in my youth. I remembered a library in Bristol

rich in such rarities, and got a friend to ask for some and hire them for me. The bookseller, finding who wanted them, wrote me a charming letter putting his whole stock at my disposal; I never read so graceful a note. Since then I have been revelling in old associations and good English. Did you ever read any of Charlotte Smith's novels? Except that they want cheerfulness, nothing can exceed the beauty of the style. Whenever Erskine had a great speech to make he used to read her works, that he might catch their grace of composition.

Heaven bless you, dear friend! I am much as I was; that is, I have been worse, but have again revived. Heaven bless you all!

Ever most gratefully and affectionately yours,

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

The Duke of Devonshire, having heard of my illness, sent, through Mrs. Dupuy, a most kind message.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *Kensington Gore.*

Swallowfield, Dec. 7, 1854.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

I am so glad that you agree with me about Fielding. Of course there are good things in 'Tom Jones,' such as Partridge's criticism upon Garrick; but take it for all in all, I know no book so much over-rated. I am now reading 'Humphrey Clinker.' How very superior that is! How much fuller of gaiety! The one thing that has provoked me is Smollett's pleadings against York Minster. But the characters are capital, and the *laisser aller* perfect. The expedition might have taken place, and the letters might have been written, which is more than one can say for any of

Richardson's books, wonderful as Lovelace is—a perfect inspiration, which the prig who wrote it never understood. *That* might have been dictated by some spirit, say of Congreve, only I believe he was not dead. After I have finished 'Humphrey Clinker' I shall try 'Peregrine Pickle' and 'Roderick Random,' and then go to 'Gil Blas' and 'Don Quixote.' It is a long while since I read 'Gil Blas.' This is going the round of the famous comic romances; but some, not so famous, are much better. I assure you there is no comparison between 'Tom Jones' and 'Hemsprong,' whether for cleverness or as a matter of mere amusement; allowing always for what, sixty years ago, was called the mad philosophy. Scott thought of it pretty much as I do.

Just now I have been reading the *feuilletons* of the 'Presse,' that contain the *Mémoires* of Georges Sand—very kindly sent to me by Henry Chorley. Bits are charming, especially some bird stories, which have great interest for me now, because some weeks ago a robin tapped at my window, and finding himself supplied—a tray fastened outside the window-sill for his accommodation, and kept well stored with bread crumbs for his use—he has not only been constant in his own visits, but has brought his friends and kinsfolk, to my great content. Her love of birds and her skill in taming them was hereditary, her mother being the daughter of a little *oiseleur* upon the Pont Neuf, whilst her father was a grandson of Marshal Saxe. Is not this a charming pedigree? Marshal Saxe being an illegitimate son of Augustus, King of Poland, it follows that Madame Sand was amongst the nearest relations of Louis the Eighteenth and Charles the Tenth—much nearer than the Orleans branch. Some of the correspondence between her father and her grandmother is delightful. Of course she has touched it up

—and there are traits of jealous fondness in the old grandmother's letter, equal to anything in Madame de Sévigné. Still there is a want of truthfulness all through. You feel that you are reading a *plaidoyer* for the exceptional woman, and not a true narrative of her life—or rather the lives of her ancestors, for as yet she is not born.

What a grievous thing this war is! And how wretchedly incompetent our miserable Government! God bless you, dearest friend! Love to dear Mary.

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

To MRS. JENNINGS, *Portland Place.*

Swallowfield, Dec. 9, 1854.

Ah! dearest friend, how very, very much too kind you are. The packet arrived in excellent condition—a brace of pheasants, a brace of partridges, and a hare. Game is the only thing I take, or can take. Even that I only suck as largely as I can, but do not swallow. I thus obtain the nutriment without oppressing the digestion. This is my meal at one o'clock. Then, at night, I have a teacupful of actual essence of game, the juices being drawn out in a jar, into which the hare and grouse are cut, without water. The jar is put for three hours into an oven, and then, when the essence is poured off, the rest of the meat is just, so to say, rinsed out with the least possible water, some of this strongest of extracts being added to the noontide meal. But although this mode of dealing with your magnificent presents is most wasteful, you send too large a supply, dear friend. How can I ever thank you half enough! I suppose the best thanks are, the being kept alive by it. I have been very ill since I wrote last, in consequence of a tornado of wind which filled my room with smoke; but gradually

and slowly I am getting round to my former state. Thanks, once again, to your family.

I have been much affected by a letter from Miss Manning, the author of the pretty account of Milton's courtship, 'Mary Powell.' I know her only by correspondence; but in her letters was so much to love and admire that when, after a long silence, I heard this week that she was dangerously ill, and had resigned herself to death, without incurring the expense of consultations, I was deeply moved, and have tried to prevail on her to reconsider her determination. Mrs. Walter (the dowager) has recovered completely under judicious treatment.

To MRS. JENNINGS.

Swallowfield, Dec. 13, 1854.

That book of Judge Edmunds' is an abomination. It came into my house by accident. An old friend, who was desirous of getting the work, requested me to procure it for him from America; and the agent whom I employed sent it to me. The writer has no reverence for anything, divine or human. Daniel Webster having died on the 24th of October, one of these circles summoned him, through their medium, and represent him as "dark and suffering," because of his not having believed this new faith of theirs; and print long dialogues (false, of course, but which they call true) without regard to the sacredness of death or the feelings of the living. Thank you, again, a thousand times.

Ever, dear friend, most gratefully yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

To the REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, *Kensington Gore.*

Swallowfield, Dec. 16, 1854.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Judge Edmunds' book arrived Saturday afternoon, just before Messrs. Pearson and Bennoch, and I sent it off on Monday by Mr. Chorley. Before this time Mr. May had called; and I wish you had seen how much these two men (I mean Mr. May and Mr. Pearson), both accustomed to death-beds, were frightened to find me reading it. Of course they did not suspect me of believing, but they say that the hold which such subjects take on the nerves is extraordinary. Bulwer is in the hands of a set of mediums, and passes his time in conversation with his dead daughter. Mrs. Browning believes every word, and referred me to that very book for facts and proofs. The madhouses in America are overflowing with the victims of the delusion. Young George R——, a gay barrister, full of levity, went to Ireland last year (this year I mean), and met with an American family called Ram, or something like. He and others of his set acted in private theatricals with the Ram daughters, who are pretty, and got acquainted with the governess. She, being a medium persuaded the young man to allow her to summon his dead brother and his poor father, and well-nigh drove him crazy. He so far believes in his father having desired him to thank his widow for her prayers for his soul, that he delivered the message, and has believed in purgatory ever since.

I shall be very curious to see 'The Hermit of Malta.'* It can hardly be worse than 'Voltigern and Rowena,'

* A play published in America, as having been dictated by the spirit of Shakespeare.

which took in half the learned people—or, indeed, than a great many of the wretched abortions which now pass under that greatest name.

A year or two back I read in a New York magazine (I think 'Putnam's') some verses, said to have been dictated to one of the mediums by the spirit of Edgar Poe. The writer had caught the peculiar chime of that extraordinary genius, and other peculiarities—in short, just what a clever imitator can catch of such a writer. And although Shakespeare is too great for any real deception, yet I have no doubt that certain turns of phrase will be caught up, and a better play concocted than 'Vortigern and Rowena,' which was poor beyond all poverty.

Mr. Chorley is gone away under the impression that I have nothing the matter with me—because he and his sister grumble and fret and whine—which you know is not my way. You must come soon, for a little while may settle all with me. Mr. May cannot get the pulse up. And yet I take six or eight doses of brandy—old Cognac brandy—almost without water, every twenty-four hours. And, by-the-by, this is a day which I never expected to see—my sixty-seventh birthday. God bless you!

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

[The three following notes were written in the last week of Miss Mitford's life.]

To the Rev. William Harness, *Kensington Gore.*

Swallowfield, Jan. 4, 1855.

My very dear Friend,

So frightful an attack of retching came on on Monday, after writing, that my notes must be limited to the fewest possible words.

I did not know Mrs. Calmudy personally, but I know quite enough about her to understand all that you will have felt on her death. You are left, dear friend, to be the one green oak of the forest, after the meaner trees have fallen around you. May God long preserve you to the many still left to grow up under your shade!

If I live till to-morrow, you will receive with this a certificate of my existence, which I never thought to send; for on New Year's Day I thought myself going, so did everybody.

Little Mr. Rennett is as kind and good a creature as lives.

God bless you, my beloved friend! I hope to see you as soon as you can come. Write to say the day and the hour. K. will get you a dinner.

Ever yours,

M. R. M.

[*Extract.*]

To a Friend of MRS. HOARE'S.

Swallowfield, Jan. 7, 1855.

It has pleased Providence to preserve to me my calmness of mind, clearness of intellect, and also my power of reading by day and by night; and, which is still more, my love of poetry and literature, my cheerfulness, and my enjoyment of little things. This very day, not only my common pensioners, the dear robins, but a saucy troop of sparrows, and a little shining bird of passage, whose name I forget, have all been pecking at once at their tray of bread-crumbs outside the window. Poor pretty things! how much delight there is in those common objects, if people would but learn to enjoy

them: and I really think that the feeling for these simple pleasures is increasing with the increase of education.

To the Rev. HUGH PEARSON.

Sonning, Jan. 8, 1855.

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

May I fix definitively with Mr. Bennock the time at which you will dine with him here? Let me know whether it is to be the 20th or the 27th. I shall not trouble you long.

This day week I had a terrible shake, being New Year's Day. I had many letters to answer, which brought on exhaustion of the brain, and such an attack of retching, that both Sam and K—— thought me dying; so did Lady Russell and Mrs. Hunter, who called and would come up. I got over it through ten doses of brandy, a wineglass each, not more watered than it would be for sale; but it has left me much weaker; and yesterday I had a return of those terrible neuralgic jars running through every limb, from which I have been latterly free. To-day I am better; but if you wish for another cheerful evening with your old friend, there is no time to be lost.

God bless you, my dear friend!

Ever affectionately yours,

M. R. MITFORD.

On the 10th of January, two days following, the generous and ardent spirit, by whom the above lines were written, passed away. Her friend, Lady Russell had been with her during the whole day, and at five o'clock in the afternoon, as she was holding her hand, saw her expire so peacefully that she hardly knew

which moment was her last. And as she lay in her coffin the features of the face, undisturbed by any trace of the cares, the vicissitudes, the exertions, the illness that she had undergone—still bearing their resemblance to the miniature that was painted of her in childhood, were overspread by an expression of intense repose and peace and charity such as no living face had ever known.

Her simple funeral, attended by her executors, the Rev. W. Harness and G. May, Esq., and by her faithful servants Mr. and Mrs. Sweetman (better known to the reader of these letters as 'Sam' and 'K——'), took place on the 18th of January. The coffin was laid in a place in the churchyard of Swallowfield which had been selected by herself; and the spot is marked by a granite cross, which was erected to her memory by the contributions of a few of her oldest friends.

THE END.

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BSB Bayerische StaatsBibliothek
MDZ Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek

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